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DEC. 12, 1925

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Western Story Magazine

EVERY WEEK

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By Austin J. Small

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The massacre of the entire population of a country may seem an enormous undertaking—but the villain in this thrilling serial made it quite possible.

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The Meanest Man in Town

By A. E. Apple

Garbed in Santa's attire, he tried to make his escape.

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EVERY WEEK

Vol. LVII DECEMBER 12, 1925 No. 1

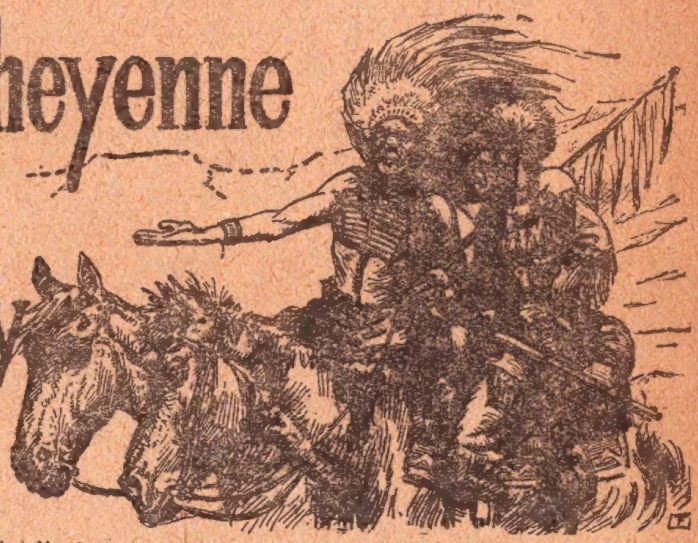
The White Cheyenne

A Sequel to The Squaw Boy

BY

Peter H. Morland

Author of "The Range Finder," etc.



FOREWORD.

WHILE journeying West in a caravan of prairie schooners, Thomas Tucker and his wife lost their lives when there was an attack by the Cheyennes. Their five-year-old son, Granvil, escaped, and he wandered, after a time, into the Cheyenne camp. He was at once claimed by Little Grouse and Rising Bull, who were mourning the loss of their only child. Little Grouse pretended that The White Badger, as the child was called, was a gift from Tirawa, an Indian god. The chief, Red Eagle, himself acclaimed the lad a great medicine.

Many years later, although The White Badger was still but a boy, Spotted Ear, who had been cursed with ill luck, begged White Badger to accompany him on a horse-thieving raid. The Badger, Spotted Ear, and five braves made a spectacular raid on the Pawnees, coming away with the very finest horses of the Pawnees, including Red Wind, the famous and beautiful stallion, which belonged to Standing Elk, the Pawnee chief.

The Badger was taken to task, however, by Red Eagle for not attempting the life of Standing Elk, chief of the Pawnees, instead of accepting Red Wind as a bribe. Because of the Badger's failure to take the life of the

Pawnee chief, he was sent to Black Antelope for counsel.

One night on the prairie, on his way to Black Antelope, The Badger crept up to the camp fire of Danny Croydon, a white trader. Danny Croydon told The Badger of his, The Badger's, white people and tempted the boy to return to civilization, but The Badger would not listen and disappeared.

The Badger remained with Black Antelope for several months, but at the end of that time he discovered the great medicine man to be merely a grasping old man and a liar, and The Badger told Black Antelope, in no uncertain terms, just what he thought of him. Then he leaped upon the back of Red Wind and rode back to his own village.

When, later, The Badger contracted a fever and the crude treatments of the medicine men failed to cure him, The Badger rode away on the back of Red Wind to a secluded spot, where he put himself into nature's care. He was well on the road to recovery when he was discovered by the enemies of the Cheyennes, the Pawnees.

The Pawnees brought him, triumphantly, into their village, and it so happened that Danny Croydon, the trader, was among the Pawnees at the time. He bought the lad from the Pawnees, giving them five rifles in exchange. Danny took The Lost Wolf, as he was now called, to a spot where there was excellent trapping, and for many years they lived together, while Danny tutored him.

At the age of seventeen, Lost Wolf was taken to Zander City. In the city he went to the home of the minister, Charles Gleason, a friend of Danny Croydon. While at Gleason's home, Lost Wolf fought Danny Croydon, left him unconscious, and rode out of the city onto the plains. Danny's verdict was that Lost Wolf would never be tamed, now.

On the plains there was an encounter with some sixty troopers, and Lost Wolf led the soldiers on the trail of Standing Elk. The Pawnees were completely routed. The battle over, the major of the troopers refused to turn over two Pawnee captives to Lone Wolf, who wished to take them to the Cheyenne camp to be tortured. Lone Wolf, very angry, declared: "Lost Wolf is gone to make a great medicine. He shall take white scalps like blades of grass in the mouth of a buffalo!"

CHAPTER I.

THE INHERITANCE.

WHAT makes me wonder chiefly is why I am not wandering around Charleston, wearing a rusty black coat, a white Vandyke, and an air of pretending not to know that I am being pointed out as a son of one of the best families in melancholy South Carolina.

I was an anomaly from the day of my birth.

I didn't fit.

When I was born, it was seen that upon my head there were a few wisps of tow-colored hair; the whole family circle nearly fainted. The terrible news was hushed up and kept from the ears of Charleston lest the fatal tongue of scandal should attaint my mother. My mother—who was five per cent dear idiot and ninety-five per cent purest saint!

Well, while I lay squawking in my cradle, the wise heads of the family got together and dragged out the tomes of the family history. I wish I could recreate the scene for you, because I know it just as well as if I had been there!

You see, my family on both sides was drenched with the book-publishing mania. Both the Rivieres and the Duchesnes had always written books—about themselves. There never had been a man, in either branch of the family, since the beginning of print who had not been capable of some sort of

wildness in his youth, who had not mulled the deeds of his boyhood over during his middle age, and who had not sat down in a few quiet moments before his end to scribble out or dictate his memoirs.

Usually what he had to write about was a string of sanctified lies. I mean, facts which had become invested with a "certain atmosphere" by frequent tellings and retellings, until not even the days which mothered the real events could have recognized their progeny. Careless little boyish remarks became bearded orations in this process of time and tender imagination; yawns became sighs, and sighs became music, so to speak.

To maintain the tradition, here am I sitting in my library doing the very same thing. Only, I think that I have just a touch more of the historian about me, and that, when some critical Diogenes hunts through my narrative for a few honest facts, he will see a scattering here and there, not too completely disguised.

To go back to the family conclave in my infancy.

The library was such a room as would fitly house the traditions of the Riviere-Duchesnes. It was a lofty chamber with dark woodwork and a gloomy red carpet upon the floor. Upon the walls appeared pictures of more or less celebrated ancestors—chiefly more, of course. The first study to which the youth of the Riviere-Duchesne family was introduced was history—family history. There was not a cousin, however distant, who, on appearing in that library which was the sanctum of the clan, could not instantly identify the subjects of these smudgy old oil paintings. Most of them were out of the wig-and-lace period when the gentry all wore high-arched eyebrows and had hands which had never done a lick of work except when the fingers were wrapped around the hilt of a sword.

They had done some work, though—that was to write about themselves:

"For the sake of my dear children, who have pressed me to commit to paper the narrative of my life."

A lot of pressing they needed! I know by my own example. Who could keep me from turning out this history? Only I am frank about admitting that I hope its future abiding place will not be in that musty Riviere-Duchesne house, but in sundry public libraries—the more, the better!

It was the solemn volumes of this library which were sought and pored over by my anxious relatives in an effort to identify other members of the family who had been blond of hair and gray of eye. All the rest were befittingly dark of skin and dark of eye and hair. What is so romantic as a black eye and a white head?

At last—I think it was Uncle Renault St. Omer Louvois, of the Duchesne branch, you know—I think it was this uncle who rushed out of the library as fast as he could one midnight, with a twenty-pound book under his arm. He gathered my anxious father, half a dozen more anxious cousins, and so forth, around him.

Uncle Renny—though I never dared to shorten his name so familiarly to his face—declared that he had trailed the secret to its hiding place. He straightway opened that volume and was instantly immersed in the details of how a great-granduncle, or some such relative, had slipped from the straight and very narrow matrimonial path of a proper Riviere-Duchesne. Finding a pretty Saxon in the County of Kent, he had made her his housekeeper and, in due time, his wife.

That was how blond hair came into the stately line.

It was a thing not to be spoken of, the history of the family of this same Kentish girl. It was not gentle. It seems that the rascals had turned out

a fine strain of buccaneering swordsmen, who had followed the sea and made nothing of taking the vessels of their majesties of Spain or of France either—not even when it involved the round thumping of a Riviere-Duchesne in command of the "lilies" of France.

However, this was not a thing to be dwelt upon.

What was important was that there was a precedent, some hundred years old, of blond heads in our family. No dreadful whisper could be circulated concerning my seven-times-sacred mother.

The next step was to discover how many times the blond hair had intruded upon what might be called the pure strain, up to this moment. It was then learned that there had been no fewer than three. The reason why their names were not prominent in our annals was that all three had been preeminent rascals!

The first was Terence. At the age of eleven he disappeared, coming back five years later with a rolling gait, a brown face, and a frightful seaman's lingo.

The bad blood was breaking out! Did not the whole world know that the Riviere-Duchesne gentry always followed the land, and nothing but the land? The sea smacks of piracy and merchandise. The Riviere-Duchesnes were *always* people of landed estates. Yet here was this Terence turning himself into a sea-roving vagabond in this disgusting fashion.

Of course, they clapped him straightway into a school. Before a single Latin quantity had been thumped into his head, he broke the nose of his tutor and escaped by night, to be seen no more during half a dozen years. When he appeared again he was a grown-up young man with some sort of a gold-laced uniform on his shoulders. No one could find out just what service this Terence Riviere-Duchesne was in, but it was certain that it was one which paid him handsomely. In prize money, he said. Presently it was discovered that the service he was in was his own. This very proper youth was a pirate of the old school, it might be said; he both picked the pockets and cut the throats of his victims. He died very properly on his own quarter-deck in the act of passing a pike through one of his Britannic majesty's naval officers.

The next blond-headed Riviere-Duchesne was given the name of Oliver. This gentleman did not go to sea. He felt that the land would be much more fitting for his talents. While he was still in his early twenties he was arrested and charged with some prodigious robberies. His escape from justice was due, many felt, to the talents of his lawyer, whom he hired with a fraction of his ill-got gains. A few years later he was accused again, this time of being the head of a whole circle of thieves, whose operations he directed.

This time he was convicted, but he disappeared and was never seen again. All of his great estate was found to be so tied up in the law that it went to his heirs, and those he had robbed could not reclaim a penny of their money.

The third blond gentleman was given the name of Paul. He, too, had felt the sea call in his blood and ran away in his boyhood. He returned to dry land and, graduating from the United States Military Academy, he immediately resigned to take service with a South American republic which was trying to get used to liberty by cutting throats on all sides with a free hand. Here he disappeared, for the most part. During the past fifteen or twenty years mention was heard of him only now and again. There were vague rumors that a certain enormously wealthy Señor Don Paolo Riviero in South America was none other than our own Paul.

These three precedents did not argue very favorably for my future. Yet my

father was a man who took the facts by the horns—and broke the neck of them if he could.

He said it was shameful to dodge the truth; that, for his part, he had no intention of attempting to do so, but he would be very happy to have any one convince him that there had not been *some* good in each of those three persons. For his part, again, he felt that they had simply been blessed with too much energy, and therefore what they had needed was not new natures, but better educated ones.

He said that he would face the fact.

His manner of facing it sent a shudder through the entire family circle. He straightway called me by the whole group of three names—Terence Oliver Paul Riviere-Duchesne!

My Uncle Renault used to say: "Even if the blood of a pirate, a thief, and a mercenary soldier are in his veins, why should you immortalize the fact in his very name?"

My poor mother said: "Alas, my dear, if you call upon the devil, is he not apt to appear?"

CHAPTER II.

THE WAY A MAN LOOKS.

MY father, as you have guessed by this time, was a man of ideas, with a theory to fit with every occasion. Therefore, though he did not doubt that the devil was really in me, he determined that the first thing to do was to "face the facts" and be honest and begin with the boy himself.

At the age of eight years, having just been brought in after blacking the aristocratic eye of a neighbor's son, I was taken by my father to the rear of the house. He locked the door, sat down with me, and entered into a long conversation, in the course of which he explained that the reason why he had decided to give me an extra hard beating was not so much because I had beaten another boy—that being not altogether unworthy of commendation—but because this fighting taste of mine was a sign of a certain devil in me.

After this, he collared me and gave me a tremendous whacking. When I had stopped groaning, he carried me into the library. He got out three books, two of them fairly old, one of them fairly new. In those three books he marked the places where the histories of the blond-headed Riviere-Duchesnes were narrated. He told me to study them well.

There was no need of telling me that. This was the sort of history that any boy would thoroughly enjoy. I began with a pirate, I proceeded with a thief, and I concluded with a soldier of fortune.

After I had finished these documents, my father showed me pictures of each of the three, pointing out that where the usual Riviere-Duchesne was a tall, well made, handsome dark man, worthy of standing in the train of a king, each of these blond fellows was a slight, waspish man with a mouth too big and a jaw too broad for beauty.

By all of these tokens, he asked me to examine myself in the mirror and regard my future well. Because there was undoubtedly a devil of violence and craft in me, and I must school myself with the greatest care. This to a boy of eight years!

The result, of course, was that I began to consider myself an exceptional youth, furnished with an excuse at birth for every evil emotion that rose in me. If I wanted to steal apples, I said that it was the spirit of Oliver rising in me. If I wanted to carry off the toy gun of another boy, I felt that this was merely the soul of Terence speaking through my flesh. If I wanted to punch the nose of another youngster, I was sure that it was Uncle Paul rising to the surface in action.

My father had only two ways of deal-

ing with this refractory spirit in me. On the one hand he talked to me like a philosopher, on the other hand he taned me like a schoolmaster of the most rigid pattern.

In the meantime, both he and I could not help being aware that he was regarded by my relatives as an unlucky prophet who had saddled three evil natures upon me with the three names he had given me. No matter what I learned about my faults, I also discovered that it was best to make them *successful* faults. Terence had lived a short life, but a merry one. Oliver had disappeared with a purse fat enough to keep him for the rest of his days, and Paul was presumed to be a man of great note and a general admitted into the most powerful councils of a flourishing country.

So I spent my time learning to ride, to shoot, and to tell only the useful part of the truth. I grew up a perfect young Persian, with the third quality changed as noted above. If I had any grace, it was the saving one of a sense of humor. If I did not take my father and the family council any too seriously, neither did I take my own faults or virtues too much to heart. In fact, I think that I was born with my tongue in my cheek. That was another thing which my father and the rest attributed to a natural perversity.

I have gone into all of these details so that you may understand the event that eventually rooted me out of South Carolina and sent me West.

It was a touchy time in that State. I had been born just out of date. Had I been a single year older, I should have marched in the armies of the Confederacy, in that unlucky '65. As it was, I was just fifteen when the war ended, and I had not yet joined the colors. For half a dozen years after that I lived in a society where "all was lost save honor," and the result was that "honor" was always underlined rather ridiculously. When people had nothing left but their gentility, they made the most of their only capital. You could not look cross-eyed at any young man in Charleston without having him come up and ask what you meant by it.

That was not so bad while I was still in my teens, because the fights that rose were settled with fists, but when I entered my twenties all of this changed. I was always getting into trouble. The first time that I seriously offended a man he happened to be a boy two years older than I. He had served in the Confederate ranks as a boy lieutenant, was an eminent example of all having been lost but that same precious honor. I offended him by laughing at a stiff, old-fashioned way he had of accosting a girl at a dance and asking for the honor of her hand in the next piece. He replied by calling me aside into a little group of other men and stating in the hearing of all that my conduct was not worthy of being called the behavior of a gentleman.

My first impulse was to knock him down, but I saw by the serious faces around me that that line would not do. Yet I could not help breaking out: "The devil, Arnold! Are you going to make a really serious affair out of this?"

A cold look settled on the face of Arnold Perrault. The same look was on the faces of the others. I saw that they suspected me of showing the white feather in a business which might mean shooting. I had to swallow my irritation. He bowed to me and said that he trusted it would not be too serious to inconvenience me, and that he would send a friend to see a friend of mine.

There you were!

There was a good deal of this nonsense going on at that date.

We met down by the river at the edge of some willows where I had often gone swimming when I was a youngster. The memory of how I had sky-

larked with this same Arnold in the old days gave me a ghostly feeling.

We were to fire at the word of an umpire. When he spoke, I shot poor Arnold Perrault squarely through the brain!

The matter would have been hushed up, if any but I had been the winner. It would have been just another unlucky hunting accident. Since I was in the matter, it was much more serious.

"The devil in young Riviere-Duchesne has grown up!" was the way people put it. "He has murdered a man—and Arnold Perrault is the man!"

Such talk hummed about until it got to the ears of the police. When I saw two officers coming toward me in the street the next afternoon, I did not stop to ask why they were bent for me so eagerly. I simply jumped over the next fence and started across the fields.

I found a horse at the next lot. It was a tame old brute which had done its share of hunting, once. Now it was pretty badly broken down in front. I threw myself on it and headed it up the meadow, across to the street beyond, via the fence, and then up the next street and over another fence.

Hunting that game old runner out of Charleston, I flew the fences that came in my way, so that by the time they got on my trail with horses under them they had a stiff handicap to overcome.

Eight miles from the start there was hardly another jump left in the carcass of my borrowed horse, so I left him down the road and jogged along on foot to the house of a friend of mine a little farther on. He was not a gentleman, but he was a great hunter, a good shot, and a good "seat." He had taught me what wicked medicine a straight left could be in a hard fight with the fists. He was a friend of mine, and when he saw me come in, hot and perspiring, he merely gave a side glance at my face, then, telling his wife to go into the next room, he shut the door.

He was always that way, was McKenzie. He thought with the speed of a prize fighter, and you could never corner him. He said: "What's up?"

"A dead man," said I. "And a friend of mine and a good fellow—Arnold Perrault. It was a stand-up fight, but now they call it murder."

You see, McKenzie was the sort of a man who had to hear all of a story or else none of it. He merely said:

"Well, when I first heard, the other day, that you had done for Perrault, I guessed that it might come along to something like this. That's their way. They don't judge a man by what he does but by what he looks, my friend!"

CHAPTER III.

AN OUTLAW.

THERE was a lot of truth in that. I had chances to think it over afterward and decide that McKenzie was one of the wisest of the wise. Just at that moment I wasn't in a humor for listening to anything, or thinking, either. All that I knew of importance was that I wanted a good, sure-footed horse under me. From McKenzie I presently got what I wanted—a tall, hard-mouthed roan with the disposition of a devil and the legs of a bronze statue.

I liked McKenzie. But I liked the roan better than I did the fighting Scot.

I used those four legs of bronze to carry me a hundred miles west, out of Charleston way. When the next morning came, I saw that I had most of my trouble for nothing. I had given that horse a good rest and a good feed the night before, but he had had too much taken out of him. He couldn't respond as I wanted him to when three horsemen came jogging down the road. I felt that I *knew* they couldn't be after me so soon. Yet something about their way of going along told me that they

were. When they quickened the pace of their horses, I was sure.

It was the telegraph, of course. The wiser heads in Charleston knew that I had been born and reared, so to speak, in the saddle. They didn't yearn to break their hearts following me straight across country. They did follow me far enough to get the general direction in which I was heading. Then they let the telegraph do the rest for them. They scattered the warning, and they sent along a little offer of a reward that meant a good deal to some of the poorer farmer folk that were out that way. They turned out in force, and I might as well have met with a dozen of them as with three.

They looked at me and then they started to gallop. I tried the roan for a turn down the road, but he wouldn't do. He could still jump, and he was too mean to confess himself beaten. He got over a fence by means of knocking down the top rail, and he floundered through the soft of the field beyond, a badly spent horse.

Even that little jump was too much for one of the three that followed me. His horse was stalled there and that left only two to come hurling after me, yelling to one another. Of course, they saw that they had me as good as in their pockets. They were wild with the foretaste of that reward already sweet in their mouths.

However, I had a friend along in the shape of a strong-shooting old .44 Colt which McKenzie had given me with a grin and this word of advice:

"Don't ever pull it unless you're planning on dead men!"

I was not planning on dead men, but I was planning on my own life, if I could save it. I turned in the saddle and blazed away. It was not very long-distance shooting, but it was from a running horse, and I was lucky when the second shot hurt one of the horses enough to slow it up badly.

That left one rider behind me. He didn't like the hand-to-hand game. He jumped off his horse and began to pop at me with his rifle. It was not one of the new repeaters, and before he had whanged away three times I was safely out of range. But the roan was done for sure.

I left him in a hollow, pretty sure that he would not give himself away by trotting about or by neighing. The trumpet blast of the last day couldn't have raised an echo from that poor gelding that day, he was so done.

Cutting away sharp to the side, I followed a little ridge covered with shrubs and rocks. It gave me cover enough to help me away. After I had gone a little distance, I had the pleasure of seeing two of my men come after and hunt across that hollow at a great rate and straight on, according to my own direction.

Well, I was out of that pinch, but there were two weeks of hard work before me before I got to the mountains. There I laid up for four or five days, resting, because I was fairly well used up. Then I came to another bad pinch, when a mountain constable came in and tried to take me single-handed.

If he had not been such a pig about the thing, wanting to get all the reward for himself, he would certainly have had me. As it was, I managed to get a bullet through his arm while he was unlimbering a big, old-fashioned rifle.

I started farther west on another "borrowed" horse. I kept that up until I was on the shady side of the mountains and still headed farther and farther westward. When I speak of the shady side of the mountains I don't want to be understood as casting any reflections on the society east of the Mississippi in those days. But there *were* some shady spots in it, and when a man had it too hot along the seaboard he hit inland.

This is just the spot for me to drop

in a little talk about how grieved I was to be away from home; how I reflected upon the misfortunes which had overtaken me, and particularly upon the cruel injustice which had driven me away from Charleston.

As a matter of fact, I was not at all troubled by these reflections. I knew perfectly well that if I happened to be the victim of an injustice in this particular case, it was the merest accident. I had made enough trouble in my time to account for almost anything. I was *not* sorry to be away from home. I knew that my parents preferred my brothers and sisters to me. In turn, I did not waste much affection on them.

I was out of place in my father's home. I knew it—and so did they. I could not listen to them and watch their grave ways without wanting to laugh. When I wanted to laugh, I generally did. There is nothing in the world that people will forgive less readily than a lack of reverence to their persons.

In fact, there was only one thing for which I was genuinely sorry. That was that my bullet had killed poor Arnold Perrault. There was nothing wrong with him except his high-headed pride. I suppose that his was not the most valuable life that was ended by that selfsame pride.

Even this regret was not enough, as you might say, to spoil my appetite for the life which I saw before me. I liked the prospect thoroughly well.

You see, I believe in the treble rascality of the nature which had been wished upon me in the three names with which my father had so foolishly endowed me. I haven't the slightest doubt that a normal name might have turned me out a thoroughly normal boy in every respect. Yet here I was, as I felt, created for the sake of doing mischief in the world and thoroughly prepared to have a good time while I was doing it.

I was twenty-one years old. I had never had a sick day in my life. My nerves were as steady as chilled steel. I had at my disposal a hundred and fifty-odd pounds of muscle and bone which I knew very well how to use to the best advantage—whether the engagement were wrestling or boxing or straight rough and tumble—for which I had a low taste!

Just when a young hero of good mind and morals would have been deploring his fate, I was looking westward with a smile in my heart. I felt just as though I had received a signed commission permitting me to do as I pleased.

When I ran out of money I ran into a job, which was running moonshine whisky from a mountain still down to the towns in the valley below. It was as risky a work as you would like to undertake. I liked it well enough, because it gave me a pair of thoroughly good horses to ride, plenty of money in my pocket, and plenty of danger blowing down the wind.

In short, I had found just the place for a young ruffian. And such I was, exactly that and no more, though my name and my antecedents might have stood for a good deal higher social stratum. I changed that name to Rivers. From that time on I was known as Terence Rivers over a widening pool of society.

A young man takes it for granted that the world is so great that no matter in what direction he travels he may keep going forever without ever once finding his own footmarks on the trail before him. Yet after I had been a while in this employment, a nasty wind blew over the mountains the rumor that Terry Rivers was wanted back in Charleston for murder.

I got a lift in wages at once. There are certain occupations where murder is at once rewarded in this fashion, and with a grisly sort of honor. That is the ultimate brand. It distinguishes the wolf from the house dog. In the line

that I was following, the real wild strain was what was wanted.

However, this rumor that blew over the mountains crystalized in the shape of a posse that started on my trail. I took my choice of my two horses, sold the other for a song, and drifted on farther west with a hundred dollars and a bit more in my pocket, a new-style Winchester rifle thrust into the long carbine holster that passed under my right knee and along the side of the saddle, two revolvers beside the pommel of that saddle, and two more stuck away in my clothes.

You might say that I was a young walking arsenal. I was. If I had had handy room for more guns and more than the one heavy-handled Bowie knife at my belt, I assure you that I would have carried more. Those were the days which you read about but to which justice can never be done. Those were the days when the West was really *bad*.

On the farther bank of the Mississippi there were the fine fellows who merely loved adventure in an innocent way, the hardy-handed chaps who wanted to beat raw nature on the frontier and make their living by their own efforts; there were the gay trappers and hunters and their set, and there were tourists, too. Yes, even as early as this there were the tourists. But there were not enough of these law-abiding elements to make up for the high seasoning of deviltry which was spread through the community.

For there were the outlawed men from the Atlantic seaboard, together with many a chosen rascal who had sailed west from Europe. You could not find any town of five hundred which did not have in it some French gambler, some Italian knife artist, some German butcher.

Of all the towns along the range of crime I could not have picked out a wilder destination than Zander City.

CHAPTER IV.

A WILD TOWN.

I DON'T know why Zander City should have passed on. The flower of its wickedness was bright enough to have given it immortality along with sundry other naughty towns. It should be living to keep before us, to-day, the memories of the bad men and the good who died in her streets, in her back yards, in her saloons and trading stores. However, civilization did not choose to place Zander City among the elect. I have seen it recently—just a brown stretch of flat ground with the dirty waters of the river walking past on the way toward the Mississippi.

Because Zander City is gone, the knaves and the heroes who once flourished in her have died, also. At a later date, no county historians found fellow townsmen to tell reverent lies, thinly salted with truth about the great men of the past. The little heroes of Rome all are remembered, but out of Carthage we know only a Hannibal and a little group which can still be seen in Hannibal's light.

So it was with Zander City. I presume that most people have heard something about a few of the leading figures in my history, such as Major Beals and Danny Croydon, the scout. Above all, everybody must have listened to tales about that famous leader of the Cheyennes—Lost Wolf. They used that name to frighten the children for half a generation, and he still crops up in histories now and again. Who has heard of that odd and graceful fellow, Running Deer? Who knows the heroic minister, Gleason, and the rest of those who wore guns in Zander City?

Well, I cannot pretend to be able to recreate the entire picture of the dead days in that town and the people that lived there. In fact, I shall try only to publish the things with which I came intimately in contact.

I had been about a year around the West, by this time. I had had my share of trouble and fighting. I had learned to be glad of three things—a gun which shot to the mark, a straight left that was poison in a fight, and a knack of sitting the saddle on a raging horse.

Those were the three talents which I brought out of Charleston with me. They were all given scope, and the edge of them sharpened by my Western experiences. By the time that I got to that town on the flats, I was what you might have called a tough one.

Good society would not have tolerated me for a moment. I wore my hat at a rakish angle, kept my coat open to show a brilliant waistcoat, and always had the finest sort of riding boots, whose heels were finished off with great silver spurs. Ordinary guns would not suit me. Even the butt of my rifle was set off with gold fretwork, and the handles of my revolvers were works of art. More than this, I carried myself with a very aggressive air which was bound to find trouble in those dangerous waters. Trouble was exactly what I wanted.

When I got off the steamer at the dock at Zander City, I stood for a time to watch men working with ropes to bind the great stacks of buffalo hides into bales for shipping down the river. Then I went on to see what was to be seen.

You would never have guessed what was in the air of that town, at this time of the day. For it was close to noon, and only the face of honest traffic showed itself. Wagons rolled in and out of the town, followed by an attending cloud of dust, and a dull murmur of labor rolled up toward that prairie sky. A murmur with sharp notes struck through it from the clang of the anvil in a distant blacksmith shop. Yonder, many carpenters kept up the burden of the march with a rattle of hammers as steady as the roll of drums.

It was a quietly sleeping town, so far as excitement was concerned. I had seen twenty places more or less of a pattern. The long row of squat shacks which staggered down the street on either side of me was not thrilling—I was not even able to guess what lay behind those dull faces.

Here a wagon went by, and when the teamster swung his whip the lash caught my hat and flicked it into the dust. I caught it up with an oath and glared at my teamster, but he was not even glancing my way as he swayed on in his lofty seat.

I finished dusting that hat off and settled it on my head again. It was barely pulled down when another whiplash curled around it, as a second wagon rumbled past over a culvert. That hat was yanked fairly from my head, tossed high in the air, and sent spinning to the farther side of the road.

It was hard to imagine that two such things could have happened by mere accident. Yet it was almost harder to believe in such skill in a whip hand as must be there, if I were to attribute it to malice.

When I looked wildly around me, I saw all that I wanted to see in order to make myself sure. No one laughed. It was not the time of day when men laughed in Zander City. But there were villainous broad grins of appreciation of the knavish trick which had been played on me.

I was twenty-two years old, and any one at that age is a sensitive fool. I leaped after that wagon like a tiger and sprang up beside the seat—only to have the muzzle of a huge revolver gaping in my very face while a brutal voice asked me what I wanted.

What had happened to me was what usually happened to people who got into a blind rage in the West in those days—particularly in towns where the population had grown faster than the law. I had simply run into a corner where I

had to show myself a fool. I was only lucky that instead of merely showing the gun he had not fired it. If he had, what would have been done about it?

Not a thing in the world! I had no friends in that town. No voice would be raised against him. The universal comment would simply be that, being unable to take a joke, I had forced a battle and been destroyed by the teamster in self-defense.

As I stood on the board sidewalk again, I was almost blind with fury. The grins had not abated. No one laughed. That, as I said before, was merely because it was not the time of day when men laughed in Zander City.

I could not endure this. I, a Riviere-Duchesne, had been handled like an idiot in this town of ruffians. I had to have redress. I picked out the largest and most formidable-looking fellow I could see, walked up to him, and demanded to know what he was laughing at.

"I ain't laughing," said he. "You ain't *worth* a real laugh!"

This to me! Shades of the pirate and revolutionary and robber whose names I bore!

My gun came out faster than a thought, and I was curling my finger around the trigger when I saw that the other fellow had not made a move to get out a weapon.

He was never to know how close he came to being wiped out in that moment.

When he did not even alter his smile, I began to realize that there *was* something unusual about the people of this town. They made me feel wonderfully like a small boy who was attempting to play a grown-up rôle and doing a powerfully bad job of it.

He said: "I don't wear a gun till noon, because me temper ain't fit for it. So run along, son, till noontime, and then come back and get a hole drilled through you, if you have to die young! We got a fool garden of a good size out here. There's always room for one more plant in it!"

By that, of course, he meant the cemetery.

Well, I was completely blind by this time. I tore off my coat and flung down my hat, shouting:

"There lies my advantage of guns on the ground. If you won't fight with a gun, you'll *have* to fight me with your fists!"

"It's before noon," said he, "and I hate to put up my 'maulies' before noon! However, if you are *bound* to have your fun, I'll do what I can to keep up my end of it!"

He stepped forth without deigning to strip off his coat as I had done. He stepped forth, a long, big-boned man with the reach and a large share of the strength of a gorilla. Not that there was anything stupidly brutal about this man. He had a long face with pale, thoughtful eyes, wonderfully cold. The instant he put up his hands, I knew that he was a boxer. He was receiving some forty pounds from poor me; he was a trained man, and he was calm as standing water while I was as mad as a raging brook.

I flung out at him with a rush. He stepped back, caught my punches on forearms as solid as bars of iron, and then, in turn, snapped his fist up.

It glanced from my face like a flung boulder, flicking off a bit of skin and flesh and sending me reeling.

"Now, bantam," said the tall man, "have you had enough of this business?"

I merely gasped out: "I'll kill you, you big devil!"

Again I came in at him, completely beyond myself with rage and grief and agonizing shame. I managed to duck under the terrible reach of a driving arm as I came at him. I landed on his ribs.

It was like striking the ribs of a ship!

Before I could strike again, a big hand caught me by the shoulder and shoved me away; the second hand dropped upon my chin and blanketed my brain in blackness so complete and sudden that I do not even remember how I felt.

What first brought me to my senses was a burning heat against my face. It was the dust of the street in which I had fallen—a dust baked stove hot by the direct rays of the midday sun. I got up in time to hear the big man say:

"Now, youngster, the thing for you to do is to skin out of Zander City before some of the *rough* boys find out that you're here. Because I ain't rough. I'm one of the lambs. But there is men in this here town that wouldn't think nothing of eating you *raw*. Now you believe me! The thing for you to do is to just start out back for the part of the country where folks has been letting you pass for a man. Up here in Zander City, disguises like you're wearin' are dangerous. You run along, and while you're running I'll keep these here shooting irons, to save you from getting into any more messes that may be a lot worse than this one!"

I was sick; my knees were swaying under my weight, and I could hardly see a foot before me. So I knew that it would be folly for me to attempt to strike back at the big man now.

Going to a box which I saw, I sat down on it until my head had partially cleared. Then I got up and started back for the boat. I was determined to kill that tall man if it were the last act of my life, and kill him before that day was ended.

CHAPTER V.

RETALIATION.

WHEN I got back to the boat, I got ashore the rest of my belongings. One of them was a long-legged Kentucky thoroughbred with the bone and substance that comes from a diet of blue grass and lime water. It had cost me a lot of money and trouble to take that bay gelding up the river with me, but I never regretted it, because Sir Thomas had speed and endurance and something that is better than both—brains! He knew how to sprint like a racer; he knew how to hold himself in and work calmly through a long day over dusty, narrow, broken trails.

When I looked into the wise eye of Sir Thomas, I felt better. I patted his neck and leaned for a moment against his shoulder.

That steadied me. There is nothing that brings assurance back to a man so quickly as the feeling that he has really gained the mastery over some twelve hundred and odd pounds of high-spirited horse. I patched up my bruised face, brushed the dust from my clothes, and shoved into my holsters my second pair of guns to take the place of the ones which the big man had taken from me so shamefully. After that, I saddled Sir Thomas and went back into Zander City, sitting in that saddle with a devil raging in my heart.

I got back quickly enough to the place where I had been made a double jackass for the first time in my life—once by a common teamster and once by the most extraordinary fists of that tall man.

When I arrived on the spot, I looked around hungrily. I was not long in finding a few faces of men who had seen me there before. They felt that they knew me well enough, by this time, and they not only smiled openly at me, but they went so far as to shrug their shoulders and sneer.

I picked the biggest of the lot and rode up to him.

"Were you here ten minutes ago?" I asked him.

He looked me over with his contempt like poison on his face.

"What if I was, son?" said he.

"If you were," said I, "the first thing I have to do is to teach you manners."

"Why, darn my heart," said this fel-

low, rearing himself up from the old, crazy apple barrel on which he had been sitting, "either the kid has a little spunk or else he's just crazy! How will you teach me manners, youngster?"

"With a whip," said I, and I gave him the lash squarely across his face.

There are ways and ways of using a quirt. You can simply sting a horse or, if you are an expert and keep the right sort of a heavy, supple lash, you can cut the skin. I had the right sort of a lash, and I was an expert. A crimson stain followed that savage cut of mine.

He screamed with pain and surprise and shame, all mingled. With one hand thrown up before his face to ward off another of those terrible blows, he reached for his revolver.

I could have killed him three times while he was dragging out that gun, and in my left hand I kept the gun ready to open fire the moment that a gun should be necessary. I did not see any necessity for it as yet. I knew how to handle that long-lashed quirt, and I fell to work with it now. The second slash wound the thin tentacle of oiled leather around the gun wrist of that man. The backward drag of my arm drew the lash off again with a force and a speed that ripped the skin from his arm and yanked the gun fifty feet away.

That would have finished most men, but he was a fighting machine, that big fellow was. Only, he was not the same sort of fighting stuff that had mastered me on that same spot not many minutes before. He came in blindly to tear me from my horse and rip me to bits in his big hands. I literally cut him to ribbons with that dreadful quirt as he came storming in, recoiling, and plunging again. I hate to speak of that scene now. At the time, every stroke gave me infinite pleasure. Finally, he had enough and turned and fled with a scream.

I sat there and watched him go, with the devil sinking back in my heart a little appeased.

When he had disappeared I looked around me with care. I found that no one was sitting down. Nor was any one smiling.

I selected my nearest neighbor, and I rode up to him, saying: "A little while ago I was beaten here by a tall fellow. If you saw that fight, I want you to tell me the name of that man and where he can be found."

The other was a fellow of middle age. And I suppose that he was past his fighting prime, or perhaps he had never had one. He merely nodded.

"You mean The Doctor, stranger," said he.

"Is he a physician in this town?" I asked.

"I dunno that he ever spent much of his time *curing,*" said the other, and he smiled faintly, with much meaning.

"Well," said I, "I want you to tell me where I can find him."

He shook his head.

"Be glad to oblige you, stranger. But I dunno that I can say that. The Doctor comes, and The Doctor goes, pretty much as he dog-gone pleases."

"What got him that name?"

"Why, I suppose that it was the sort of scientific way that he had of cutting up gents."

"I follow that idea. Now I want you to tell The Doctor, if you see him, that I am going to be back in this same place at three o'clock in the afternoon of this day, and that I expect to find him here. When I find him, I am going to shoot him through the head if I can!"

I reined back Sir Thomas, and he gave way, prancing, because that was the only direction in which he didn't like to travel. And I said to that choice cross section of Zander City's finest ruffians and cutthroats:

"And if there are any friends of The Doctor in hearing, who want to tell me

that he is anything else than a scoundrelly blackguard, I would like to have them step out and speak, because just now I happen to be in a listening humor. Do you hear? Do you all hear me?"

They heard me, but that was not all that they were to hear. For I rode up and down that place on Sir Thomas, cursing Zander City and the men thereof to their faces, telling of the regions from which they had come, and of the place to which they were all inevitably bound.

They listened to me seriously, never smiling, but with their heads cocked a little to one side as though they were preparing to pass critically upon the quality and quantity of the cursing which I was doing at that moment.

Not a one of them answered me. So I left them and retired to a distant saloon. There I stretched myself out in the shadows of a back room which was filled with reminiscent stenches of stale cigars and lager beer and terrible whisky. I gave a dollar to a loafer to watch the door, to warn me if any one tried to come in, and, in the meantime, call me at ten minutes before three o'clock, unless I was disturbed before that time.

At ten minutes to three I had to be shaken by the shoulder before I could waken. My nerves are not now what they were then. At the time it had seemed to me a perfectly natural and normal thing to be doing—to take a restful little nap before swinging into action. For two hours I snored in that back room; then I got up and shook myself together.

When I started out, after paying the loafer, the bartender significantly pushed a black bottle toward me. I put a dollar on the bar and asked for a glass of water and a towel. I used the water to pour over the back of my neck and head, and the towel to rub myself dry again. There is nothing better than a dose of this sort to pull the wits together and brush the cobwebs out of the brain.

I was ready for my work when I stepped out of that saloon and untethered Sir Thomas. Then I walked down the street with that good horse following me like a big dog. I wanted to have an even steadier base than Sir Thomas himself when I unlimbered and went into action against The Doctor.

As I went along, I rather regretted that I had not made inquiries about The Doctor at the saloon. On the whole, it was perhaps as well that I had not learned all of the details of his heroic reputation before I started against him.

At the same place where I had first encountered the big Doctor, I slowed up, going along at a casual gait. I had an audience, now, and it was the sort of a scene in which I liked to figure. I suppose that most young men are the same. If they are going to be virtuous, they want to be virtuous to the playing of a drum, and if they are going to be wicked, they want to be wicked on a broad stage, with plenty of audience standing about. I couldn't have been half so savage if there had not been a crowd on hand.

Big Sir Thomas walked quietly along behind me, keeping his eye thoughtfully on everything, after the fashion of a thoroughly good horse. I strolled down the center of that street, searching for The Doctor everywhere.

I went a hundred yards down; then I came a hundred yards back. No Doctor appeared. Then an idea like a hot hand caught at my brain and made me dizzy. The idea was that The Doctor had been afraid to come out to face me!

Back in my head there was something that told me that any such thought was perfectly silly, because The Doctor was not the sort of man to sidestep trouble in any form. If he were deadly with his bare hands, I had a very great confidence that he was probably just as

sure with powder and lead—or the cold edge of a knife.

When my second turn brought me back in front of that watching crowd, I stopped and said: "Gentlemen, I've announced that at this hour I intended to meet The Doctor. I've published that intention through Zander City and still there does not appear to be any Doctor here! I don't want to accuse any one on a slight cause. But I have to tell you that I think that The Doctor is afraid to show his face to me."

No, they were not smiling. I was just spectacular enough to catch their fancy, and I suppose the ugly tale about the horsewhipping of the second man of that day had come to their ears, also. They watched me with a contented silence—the silence of rough men who suspect that there is some one a little wilder and rougher than themselves in the offing.

Moreover, The Doctor was not there, and that fact gave a good deal of point to me and what I had to say.

So I could swagger my fill there and enjoy my big moment without danger. Danger just then was exactly what I wanted. I wanted to get the poison out of my system, and I could do it only by soundly thrashing some man just as *I* had been thrashed.

After a pause, I said: "Failing The Doctor, I'd be glad to see and talk with any other fellow in this crowd who calls himself a friend of The Doctor and is willing to stand up in his place. I'm not proud. I'll take a substitute!"

It was the sort of a joke that went down with such men. They acknowledged that bit of wit with a deep-throated chuckle. Then they waited, and I saw eyes glancing askance here and there through the crowd, as they picked out various acquaintances of that celebrated man.

It was a pleasant climax.

I saw three or four fellows gathering their resolution to come out and tackle me, unknown problem that I was in Zander City, because they were known friends of The Doctor, and they felt that they were being forced to show their hands in public or be considered cowards.

However, that consummation was not to take place. The situation still hung in suspense, and action had not yet been precipitated, when a voice and a rumor spread from the farther end of the street, bringing to Zander City news of such importance that I was forgotten. The Doctor was forgotten, and all other such minor details of life were brushed to the side in the minds of the worthy citizens.

Here was a bit of history shoved under their eyes, and history of exactly the type that they were the best fitted to criticize. The voice that called from the distance said: "They've caught Running Deer, and they're bringing him in alive!"

Who Running Deer was I hadn't the slightest idea, except that I knew enough to recognize the title as that of some Indian chief. Then came Running Deer himself at the head of a procession that I could never afterward forget.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAPTIVE.

EXCEPT for a loin strap, he was naked; his long hair was decorated with a single feather very much the worse for wear. With his hands tied behind his back, he was mounted upon his favorite war pony, a shaggy little beast with thick legs and a roached back that looked like nothing at all, as the saying is. In spite of this poor outfit, Running Deer looked exactly what he was—the most brilliant and the most famous of the young Cheyenne war chiefs.

Taking them from first to last, I suppose that the Cheyenne was the finest fighting man among the Indians of

North America. They were big, strapping fellows; they felt that, man for man, they were the heroes of the world. They carried the impress of this self-confidence in their faces.

Running Deer was an exception among an exceptional lot. He was made like a Greek athlete of the youthful type. He looked like his name, composed specially for grace and speed, and he had a handsome face. Change the color of his skin, and any white mother would have been glad to have him as one of her children.

This seemingly good-natured red man was taken down the street in the midst of the most triumphant cries and cheers. Those rough fellows, who had been standing about as though they despised everything in the world, now acted like a lot of boys. They capered in front of Running Deer, yelled, and waved their hands. The Cheyenne kept his head high and his eyes straight in front of him. You would have thought, if you looked at his face alone, that he was the conqueror, returning from war, followed by his men and their captives, so contemptuous of his conquered foes that he would not allow that contempt to appear in his features. You would have thought that these yelling whites were the applauding men of his own tribe who had come out of the village to greet him, and that he was mildly displeased with them because they had remained at home.

Then you looked down and saw that he carried no weapons, his hands were tied, and a rope on either side attached his pony to the saddles of two of his captors. Another pair followed behind him with their loaded rifles carried slung under their armpits, so afraid of the tricks of this savage that they were constantly ready and really waiting just to blow him into the next world at a stride.

You had to look at that picture in this way—very closely and seriously—before you could see all the meaning that there was in it.

The longer you looked the more you could see the horrible antipathy of race for race, for instance, with a million years of precedent and custom behind either side—a million years which would have to be unlived before the two could understand one another. The whites looked upon the Cheyenne as if he were a brute fashioned in the shape of a man more or less by accident. The Cheyenne, behind his mask of indifference, regarded the whites as snakes whose fangs it would be a virtuous act to draw.

I write these things with half a century between me and that day. I cannot pretend that I had all of those thoughts at that moment. There wasn't much difference between me and most of the men of that crowd. If anything, that difference was morally in favor of them.

When I saw Running Deer I was chiefly impressed by the fact that he looked like a first-rate fighting man. I said to a fellow near me, as I drew to the side of the street to let the procession pass:

"Who is this Running Deer?"

He flashed one glance at me, irritated to have his eyes dragged away from that picture just then, wondering, too, how any one in the world could fail to understand how important this day was and what was the identity of the Indian.

Then he said: "Running Deer? He's Lost Wolf's best friend—if *that* means anything to you!"

It didn't, of course, more than a mere name. I had heard of Lost Wolf here and there—but in what connection I could not recall. From the intonation of the frontiersman who furnished this information, and from the manner in which he looked on Running Deer—half exultation and half awe—I was prepared to guess at some really tremendous personage in Lost Wolf.

The chief distinction of Running Deer was merely that he was the best friend of *another* Indian. Then what an Indian that second one must be!

I decided that I must elicit more information before I died with curiosity. I could not see this Running Deer now. He was merely a floating shadow of a man. All that I was searching for with greedy eyes was Lost Wolf—the man behind the man.

There were about sixty frontiersmen going by. They were riding either singly or in pairs, a wild motley of men and weapons and horses of all kinds and nationalities. Since there was a good deal of distance between the riders, it took a time for the train to go by.

As it wound along, I shifted my position a little and murmured confidentially in the ear of a companion:

"There'll be a rumpus when Lost Wolf is brought in!"

He looked at me with a cross between suspicion and astonishment.

"Do you think he'll *ever* be brought in?"

"Why not?" said I. "The best redskin in the world has to go down at last before white men's wits and ways, I suppose. Don't you think so?"

He continued to stare at me, but only with half an eye. The rest of his head was returning to the procession which still filed past, every man sitting particularly straight in the saddle, as if all sixty of them were extra proud because he had had a hand in the capture of a single savage. Which they were, too. Cheyennes were a brand of savage which could not be duplicated in any other part of the world.

Then my new companion said: "Since when did Lost Wolf have a red skin? Can you tell me that, stranger?"

It seemed peculiarly difficult to get any information about this chief out of the crowd. I stepped deeper among the men. I said to the first one whose eye I caught in passing:

"The Cheyennes are a great lot, with two chiefs like Running Deer and Lost Wolf!"

"Good heavens!" this man said in great dismay. "Have they made that fellow a chief, now? When did you get that news?"

He was immensely excited and sought to stop me and get more of the details of this bit of gossip, but I hurried away from him.

I decided that Lost Wolf was one of the queerest creatures in the world if he were an Indian so great that his mere friendship distinguished another brave and made him great. Yet if he were without a following as a chief and if he were even without a red skin—what was he, then?

If I had been curious before, of course, I was in a flame now. I decided that it was hopeless to try to draw out information from these people except by inference and innuendo—getting them to talk about something about which they thought I already knew. That is still the best way with your true Westerner, who still hates to explain the simplest matters to a stranger.

I mixed still deeper in the crowd, and as half a dozen riders went by on the tall, grand-moving horses which were being brought from the East to the plains, just as I had brought Sir Thomas, I said casually to a companion:

"It's a queer thing that those little, ratty Indian ponies can keep away from real horseflesh like this! Still Running Deer and Lost Wolf and their kind must know how to make the most out of those runts!"

This time the man who had caught my words turned around and swore openly in amazement.

"Stranger," said he, "who ever has seen Lost Wolf on anything but the finest hoss that ever stepped on grass?"

I slunk away.

From that moment I began to almost

give up hope of ever learning anything about Lost Wolf. No matter what I suggested—and surely everything that I had said had been most probable—I seemed to be wrong—utterly and laughably wrong.

However, in a half-despairing fashion I determined to keep up my cross-fire in the hope of raising a little news about the great and absent Lost Wolf.

I retired with Sir Thomas. As the last of the riders went past and most of the crowd followed, I began to pat the shoulder of my beauty, saying quietly to an old chap near by—one philosophical enough to let the others follow the procession without paying any heed to them:

"Well, partner, they'll remember this day, I suppose, now that Running Deer has been brought in!"

"Aye, they'll be apt to remember it!" said he.

It seemed to me that there was an evil light in his eyes. Therefore I added: "You act as though you were in doubt about it being a good thing to bring him in at all."

His eyes glinted at me aside from under his shrubbery of brows.

"I doubt it, right enough!" said he.

I waited, sure that he was now excited enough to follow up his last remark without further urging on my part, and I was right.

"Oh, they're pretty happy to-night," said he, "but *I* say that they're a lot of fools! Sixty brave men with the wits enough to get Running Deer, but without the wits to take his scalp and leave him dead out there on the plains!"

"Why," I said, surprised by this calm brutality, "would that really be the best thing?"

He snapped out: "Suppose that you found a bear's cub, would you take it home and then leave the door open after you got inside your cabin?"

He waited, glaring.

"Well," he added, "how can the door of this town be shut? Will you tell me that? Shut fast enough to keep out Lost Wolf, when he comes raging and ramping into town?"

He was very much worked up and he went on: "There's gunna be dead men around these parts before the morning ever takes a squint at Zander City. But *I* ain't gunna be one of them. I'm gunna be off in the tall timber. I'm gunna jog right along!"

He started up and hurried off as though there were no time to lose.

I gaped after him in amazement. One would have thought that Lost Wolf was resistless wildfire!

CHAPTER VII.

FOR RUNNING DEER.

MY personal grudge and rage against the big Doctor was gone, by this time. Not that I had any reason, of course, for hating him the less, but because I had come on the trail of something much larger than he or I. I had before me the graceful figure of Running Deer, whom sixty frontiersmen could rejoice in capturing because he was the friend of Lost Wolf—who was neither chief nor even redskin!

I could learn what had happened this day concerning Running Deer, at the least.

Rene Laforce, that brutal and famous scout from Canada, had been in Zander City the day before, when news was brought in that a party of Cheyennes had swooped down on the pasture lands near the town where a large number of horses were grazed, carrying off seven or eight score of them.

Laforce had reputation enough to be given command of the party of riders which started in hot pursuit. They rode fast enough to come up to the heels of the Indians. There were only some dozen or fifteen of these, but, like true Cheyennes under a dauntless leader, they had turned back and started

to put up a running fight to keep off the whites, while two or three of the Indians kept the stolen horseflesh on the move.

The leader of this rear-guard action, which cost the men from Zander City three or four casualties, was the brilliant figure of Running Deer. Hard luck followed him at the last, however, and it was chance rather than the skill of the whites that brought him down. The pony he was riding stumbled, catching its foot in a hole in the ground, throwing the young chief so heavily that he was stunned. The Cheyennes turned back to fight for him, but they had no chance. A wave of a score of triumphant men whirled around Running Deer. With this living prize the party turned and started back toward Zander City.

Here was Running Deer among us, and yonder on the prairies was his friend, Lost Wolf.

"But," said I, "I don't see why Lost Wolf is so much to be feared, if he allows his friend to be carried off like that."

I was told that Lost Wolf was not there; that he could not have been there, for had he been present the men of Zander City would have had to pay dearly for their captive.

Here I was met by a current of rumor which I myself had lucklessly started—that Lost Wolf had been made a chief among the Cheyennes!

Too much filled with shame to remain to hear any more after this, I simply hurried along to get as near as I could to the place of activity, which was near Running Deer, of course.

He had been put inside the store of one of the biggest traders in the town. The walls of that building were composed of heavy logs. As it was in a central location, it was felt that a sufficient guard against Lost Wolf would be erected in this manner.

I stepped in and visited an offhand street council on the way, where the matter was seriously debated back and forth. The leading orator of that group maintained that the only politic thing to be done was to turn Running Deer loose as soon as he had procured the restitution of the horses which he had stolen. Because, this town politician of the frontier maintained, Lost Wolf, who up to this time had never taken arms against the whites, would now certainly go on the warpath to avenge the death of his friend. And bitter would be the visitation of his vengeance upon Zander City and all the men thereof! Nothing less than the immediate wiping out of the town was prophesied!

From that place, I went on to the store where the chief was kept. I had no sooner presented myself at the door than I was not only admitted where the rest were kept back, but I was presently offered a position of trust. They wished me to become a member of the group which was guarding the distinguished prisoner.

No young man can refuse anything that smacks of distinction. When you are past thirty the edge of the appetite for fame is a little more slack, whether it has been gratified or not. Up to that age there is nothing like a pat on the shoulder from the right hand. So it was with me, and presently I found myself one of half a dozen men who lounged in the store.

They were experienced men of the frontier. I could see that at a glance. There was responsibility in their faces and pride in their manner, so that I was very glad to be counted one of them. At least, my foolishness of that day, including my trouncing at the hands of The Doctor, had brought me *this* much reward. Zander City was willing to recognize me as a man of might!

I had only a moment for the faces of the other guards, however. They had accepted their task philosophically, and, like men who know how work

should be done, three of them were lying down and resting, though not one was asleep. Of the other three, two sat on opposite sides of the spot where the prisoner was tied securely to one of the heavy upright posts that supported the roof of the store. These two, it might be taken for granted, would spot any approaching danger. The third member of the watch faced the prisoner himself, keeping a watchful regard upon the young chief.

A very neat arrangement, if you think it over for a moment. I would not have given a damaged nickel for the chances of Running Deer to escape.

He was the fellow that I wanted to see at close hand, however. My first glance had given me a flashing and a brilliant picture of that captive. Now that I could examine him at my leisure, I saw that I had underestimated him rather than put him above the facts.

He was lean from the labors of a long trail. You could have counted his ribs with the greatest ease. That leanness, like the thin sides of a wolf, rather seemed to make him more formidable. Since all superfluous fat was gone, I could follow the outline of every muscle. He was robed in active strength. Ten thousand whipcords seemed stretching and stirring under his skin whenever he moved.

Yes, he looked the part of a man who would be all teeth, if he were cornered. I remembered at that moment stories which I had heard from men who declared that one white man was enough for any half dozen Indians. I could recall that they had said these things in the quiet warmth of their hearth, long after they had left the ardors of the frontier behind them.

Two men like Running Deer would have coped with any pair of whites that I had ever known!

I could see a broad bruised place on his temple, as large as the heel of my palm. It was greatly swollen. From the skin, which was perfectly black, a number of bristling bits of grass projected. Grass, bits of gravel, and all had lodged in his flesh in his fall, and no one had thought of cleansing the wound.

I stepped closer to him and laid my hand against his forehead. It was what I expected—burning hot! What with exhaustion and the mental strain of his captivity and his hurt, he was in a high fever.

Well, I was as calloused a youth as you could find in a long hunt, but I could not help a feeling of compassion for the Cheyenne in his misery. What touched me most was that an accident had felled him. I knew that the best horse in the world may go down, and the best rider in the world may be thrown.

I remembered, too, having been lost in the country and going without water for twelve hours of a hot summer day. One glimpse of the dried, cracking lips of the Cheyenne told me what he was suffering.

Getting him a quart tin of water, I held it at his lips. He made no move to accept it. I thought I understood him. Perhaps he suspected that the white men would make short work of their problem by poisoning their prisoner. So I tasted the water myself and then offered it to him again.

I shall never forget how his dark eyes flashed suddenly up to me while the dark copper of his skin turned red. He drank, paused with heaving sides, and drank again. He emptied the measure of water and leaned back against the post with his eyes closed—almost overcome with the relief which that draft had given him.

"Why," said one of the guards, "it looks like the Deer is pretty dry. I never thought of that!"

"Let him dry up," said another. "He has given some of our boys worse than that!"

I looked over at the speaker and he looked straight back at me in a very ugly fashion. He was a true-blue Indian hater. You could tell that at a glance. In that day, you were apt to run across one of these fellows in any part of the country, men who had had nothing to do with Indians except when the latter were in their most devilish moods. They could keep your hair bristling all night with tales about atrocities which had been committed by the tribes. A lot of them were true, but nearly all a bit exaggerated.

Very frequently the cause of trouble between the races came from the white man first. Of course, his rascality usually took the form of some merely civil crime—such as giving the redskin light weight and short measures in his trading, or, again, by breaking a little promise. What Indian would think of a lawsuit? He despised methods of talk. He knew nothing but the warpath and the scalping knife to make wrong right.

Not that I am apologizing for the Indians. I don't pretend to know everything about them. Even at the last I was never able to speak any Indian tongue with a real fluency. And who can know any people, really, unless he has mastered their speech thoroughly? I am only frankly setting forth the Indians whom I happened to meet, and what they were at the time I met them, some bad and some good. I have an idea that if one were able to draw a middle line between the two extremes one would find that the Indian's character was just about like the character of a child—a child with the power of a man in his hands!

When I listened to the last speaker and looked across the room to him, into the rage and the scorn that was in his eyes simply because I was daring to extend a little charity to that poor devil of a prisoner, I can assure you that all the doubts I had myself about Indians were banished for the moment under the determination to give still further offense to that Indian hater.

I cast about for a means of giving that offense. That was my motive rather than any Christian charity for the sufferer, I have to admit.

First, I cleaned out that wound of the straws and the bits of gravel. It was horribly inflamed from this dirt and from the long ride in the heat of the sun. On the whole, it was simply remarkable that that man was not raging in a delirium, such was the condition of that wound.

The relief was so great, as I reduced the swelling, that the poor devil broke into a perspiration. I gave him a mere taste of brandy to brace him up a bit. That brought another snarl from the guard, but he had heard enough about me to keep from accusing me to my face. He merely contented himself with muttering and glowering at me.

When this work was ended, I cast about me for some other means of angering my friend, the Indian hater. The sight of a pile of jerky in a corner of the store exactly fitted in with my wishes. I picked up a couple of big strips of that meat, and since the Cheyenne's hands were both tied behind him, I fed him that meat, mouthful by mouthful. He ate like a savage wolf at the edge of death from starvation.

All this time he had said not a word. Except for that first upward flash of his eyes, I could not tell whether he were moved or not by my kindness to him. As a matter of fact, as I have already said, I did not care. I was aiming at provoking that other frontiersman, and, indeed, he was raging with anger before I had ended.

Just then, big Laforce came into the store. The aggrieved Indian hater registered a murmured complaint against me, and Laforce instantly granted the complaint.

Perhaps you have heard of Laforce. He was one of the biggest and ugliest

men that ever lived. His face was perfectly normal except for one feature. That was an extraordinary growth of flesh about the chin which made him simply horrible to behold.

This Laforce told me, politely enough, that now that he had returned they could dispense with my services, for which he thanked me. Since there was nothing to be done unless, like a fool, I began by questioning his authority, I simply walked out of the store, rather well pleased with myself. Because I was such a fool in those days that next to making a friend I was gladdest of making an enemy, and I succeeded much better in the second line than in the first.

The instant I was out of the store, I was glad that I was in the open, for word came that a message had reached Zander City from Lost Wolf himself!

To be continued in the next issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.

ARIZONA RANGERS DISCHARGE PAPERS

DISCHARGE papers for the twenty members of the Arizona rangers who were enlisted at the time that organization was disbanded in February, 1909, may be obtained from Con P. Cronin, State librarian, by application to his office in the State capitol at Phœnix. These papers have been mislaid for ten years or more and have only recently been brought to light. They will be regarded as valuable souvenirs of their ranger days by the men to whom they were issued. If they are not claimed, they will eventually be turned over to Major George H. Kelly, State historian, to be filed away with other relics of the territorial days.

The papers are signed by Captain Harry Wheeler, the last commander of the rangers, and are approved by Governor Joseph H. Kibbey, then territorial governor of Arizona, in accordance with the act of the legislature abolishing the organization.

The discharges are for the following members, who were enlisted in the rangers at that time: S. J. Hayhurst, E. R. Lenz, W. O. Parmer, O. F. Hicks, James T. Homes, Oscar McAda, F. S. Wheeler, W. O. Olds, John McK. Redmond, William Sparks, W. N. Wilson, William Speed, Cy Byrnes, Lew H. Mickey, Arthur F. Chase, "Tip" Stanford, W. L. Carpenter, Ben W. Olney, H. E. Woods, and M. T. "Tom" Gadbery.

The Arizona Rangers were organized in 1901, and until their disbanding in 1909, they did excellent work in maintaining law and order in the territory, capturing many desperadoes and cattle and horse thieves. Burton C. Mossman was the first captain of the rangers, and Harry Wheeler was the last. Subsequently, Wheeler served as sheriff of Cochise County for a numbers of years.

A Girl and a Malemute

by

Frank Richardson Pierce

Author of "Come A-runnin' Tip" etc.

FOR several minutes the malemute had stood sniffing the air. It was apparent he was not just sure of the indefinite scent the lazy morning breeze brought to his keen nose.

"What's the matter, Tip?"

At the sound of Joe Hardy's voice, Tip looked back and saw his beloved master framed in the cabin doorway. The sun had been up for hours, but it was evident Joe had just crawled from the blankets. His hair was mussed up, and he blinked his eyes as if wondering what it was all about. Most men wash the sleep from their eyes upon arising, but Joe Hardy's first duty each morning was to greet his big lead dog. Usually Tip was either in the middle of the cabin waiting, or at the door. This morning he had gone down to the brink of the river bank.

"What's the matter, Tip?" Joe repeated the query, then an exclamation escaped his lips as he noticed a single sour dough coming in the distance. The man carried a heavy pack, but he was traveling fast despite the weight of his pack and his years. Presently he noticed the cabin and changed his course. "Well, dog-gone my hide if it ain't 'Lonehand' Conner! Well, Tip, that means only one thing—a stampede!"

Joe Hardy did not welcome a stampede, but as surely as a robin is the sign of spring, Lonehand Conner was the living indication of a new strike. Lonehand, as may be guessed by the name the North had given him, played a lone-hand game. If a prospector returned from the hills and acted the least bit mysterious, Lonehand instantly concluded the mysterious party had struck it and acted accordingly. As all it takes to start a healthy stampede in the gold country is a discreet manner and a few samples of gold, Lonehand was on the go most of the time. If he lived long enough, he might strike it rich.

Joe Hardy watched his approach with misgivings. He desired no stampede in his valley. There was coal worth millions, and Joe desired permanent development; placer mining does not bring that. A city of thousands springs up over night in the placer country, then dwindles and dies.

Conner shed his pack five minutes later. "Heard you was up here, Joe," he said by way of greeting, "and figured I'd say 'hello' and maybe borrow

Tip off'n you. I'll pay you well for the big cuss!" He looked Tip over with admiring eyes, then in an effort to avoid the query he knew Joe was sure to put, began to discuss the dog. "Great dog, Tip! He's got all the strength and hardiness of the wild, the loyalty of the domestic, plus a lot of hard sense and affection. Other dogs always give way, even when he's sick, I've seen 'em give way. Honest men look him in the eye, but the shady gents that happen along the trail shift their gaze. I've always said, watch how a dog acts toward a man, and a man acts toward a dog, then judge accordingly and you can't go wrong. Take Tip, now——"

"Well, you're not going to take Tip now, or any other time, Lonehand, because he can't be begged, borrowed or swiped unless it is life and death." Then came the inevitable question. "For what place are you bound, Lonehand?"

Lonehand bit off a healthy chunk from a plug of tobacco, then cocked a thoughtful eye at the sun. He was constitutionally opposed to confidences of any kind. He rightfully contended that it was the man who kept still who heard the most, as the man who talked heard merely his own words which were in no sense educational to him personally. He wiped his eyes with his sleeve.

"Your question stirs up tender memories, Joe. Makes me think of that old pardner of mine. He died right back in those hills, and as he lay gasping he says to me, he says, 'Lonehand! I'm about to start mushing into that undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler ever returns. Promise me one thing, Lonehand,' he says, and I said I'd promise anything. Then he says, just as plain as though it was yesterday, 'Lonehand, keep my grave green!' And I said I would, and so every year I go up there and paint the dirt over his grave a dark green, the soil being such that grass won't grow!"

"You're not fooling me, none," Joe Hardy retorted, "you're stampeding. Well, here's one man and one dog that won't bother you. Tip and I mushed in, and we figure to go out on the railroad. I didn't know there was any placer gold in the back country, yet there must be or you wouldn't be busting your back carrying grub in there, or is that green paint you've got in that pack."

"It's green paint!" Lonesome squirmed into his pack, a queer contrivance fashioned so that the legs of a pair of overalls supplied the necessary shoulder straps. "S'long, Joe!"

"S'long, Lonehand, but I still maintain there isn't any placer gold in that back country."

"You keep right along maintaining it," Lonehand tossed over his shoulder. "There ain't!"

"Dang it!" Joe exclaimed, when Lonehand had disappeared. "They'll be coming by the hundreds now. All Lonehand has to do is to sneak out of town, and every sour dough who hasn't anything better to do will pack up and follow. Well, Tip, we keep out of it, eh, boy? Too much grief and not enough reward!"

Tip was sniffing again, and Joe growled something. Then he carried a bucket of water from the creek and proceeded to wash his face with much blowing and splashing. His face was still in the towel when he heard the unmistakable sound of hurrying feet.

"Already, eh? Some more sorrowing pardners packing in buckets of paint to keep departed sour doughs' graves green. Huh! They make me sick!"

"Joe Hardy, quick!"

At sound of the voice, which was feminine and contained a note of distress, Joe jerked his head from the towel. "Sufferin' malemutes, if it

isn't Ethel Goodman. What in thunder is she doing up here?"

Joe, accompanied by Tip, ran down the trail to meet her. She gave a tired little cry and fell into Joe's arms. Gently he lowered her to the grass, then gathering up two handfuls of water, tossed it into her face.

"There, that's better. I know it's cold, but for a minute you had me plumb scared."

The girl looked about wildly. "Quick, my husband, he's down there!" She indicated some place several miles down the river.

Instinctively Joe examined his .44; next he headed downstream. Tip started to follow, but Joe ordered him back.

"You stay with her, boy. There's something about this I don't like. First, Lonehand comes along, then on his heels comes this girl talking about her husband, and I didn't even know she was married. Wonder who the lucky dog is?"

Two miles below his cabin, Joe Hardy came upon a wounded man. "Dick Garner, eh, and mighty near dead!" Joe examined the wound with experienced fingers. "Creased across the chest by a .30-30 bullet, too. Man, that little girl of yours come mighty near being a widow. As it is——" He did not finish. The quest had taken considerable time, but bringing Garner around required even more. Joe saw two parties of three or four men each pass high above him. Like the other stampedes of his experience the men were hurrying, lashing themselves to the utmost—lest some one beat them to the choicest claims. Like other stampedes, those who got there first would miss it, and those who took what ground was left would very surely strike it.

After two hours work Dick Garner opened his eyes. "Is she safe?" he muttered. "Is Ethel——" He lapsed into unconsciousness again.

Joe Hardy shouted into the wounded man's ear as if to pierce the fog that enveloped his brain. "She's safe! Ethel's safe. Safe, boy, at my cabin!" The eyelids fluttered, and Garner half nodded with a weak effort to speak.

Joe waited patiently another hour, then he hailed a party of three men. "I know you boys are in a hurry, but we've got a wounded man here. Help me fix up a stretcher out of this blanket and those poles, and we'll carry him to my cabin. It's tough to have to waste the time, but supposing it was you——"

The men made no protest, but regarded it as an incident of the trail. "Who shot him?" one asked.

"I don't know," Joe replied, "but I'm going to find out!"

"Some pretty hard nuts on this stampede. The old-timers are all right, but several gangs from outside aren't improving things any."

They carried Garner to Joe's cabin, then hurried on to make up for lost time.

The moment they were gone Joe lifted his voice and called. "Ethel! Hey, Ethel!" This failing to bring a response, he began to whistle and call for Tip. It was strange that within a few brief hours both the girl and dog would disappear. Hardy left the wounded man and examined the surrounding clearing for signs of a struggle. There were none. Here and there he caught an imprint of the girl's small and rather modish boot, but this also vanished. Of Tip there was no trace.

Garner had regained consciousness when he returned. "Where's Ethel, Joe?"

"She's all right, Dick. She was a bit tuckered out when she reached here, but was unharmed! Now you just take it easy and tell me——"

"Joe, you're deceiving me. You always was a poor liar and now—tell

me what's happened. I—you can't fool me!"

"Well, I'll lay the cards on the table. She's gone, somewhere, but don't worry. Tip has gone with her."

This seemed to relieve the wounded man somewhat. He gathered himself together with an effort. "This isn't a placer stampede," he explained, "but a hard-rock proposition. Ethel's father discovered some fine ore in the back country years ago. He did some assessment work, developed it in a small way, then went outside and brought in some wealthy people from the East. The engineer they later sent in, reported the cost of getting the ore out would eat up the profits. The railroad that is coming to your coal claims now makes this hard-rock proposition worth millions, and the stampede is on. Goodman is too old to tackle it himself, but his mind is clear, and he told us just where to drive our stakes, as he put down test holes all over. This is a sort of honeymoon trip for us. We planned to stake the old claim, not so much for ourselves as for Goodman. Evidently others, particularly a man named Nashby, figure we know what we are doing. To-day I was ambushed. I knew I was hard hit, but I pulled my coat together so Ethel couldn't see the wound and told her to get you. She was for staying, but I convinced her that it was only a spent bullet that put my leg out of commission. Then she started running. I managed to wave my hand as she looked back for the last time, then I flopped over. Did you go through my pockets, Joe? I don't mean——"

"I know you don't mean anything, Dick. No, I didn't go through your pockets. Why?"

"Well, somebody did. I knew what they were doing but couldn't stop it." A faint smile spread over his face. "You see, Ethel has the map Goodman sketched!"

"She has?" A queer expression came into Joe Hardy's eyes.

"Yes. So I guess we fooled them!"

"I guess you did, Dick!" Joe paced his cabin thoughtfully, debating whether or not to speak his mind, for he was badly worried. He wanted to keep himself and Tip out of this stampede, but it looked as if they were to be forced into it. Tip, at least, was gone. "Dick," he said suddenly, "you are a husky, two-fisted Alaskan, and you should be able to stand most anything. I know Ethel better than you do. I've seen her grow up. You only know her as a sweetheart and bride; you haven't been married to her long enough to learn just how determined she can be once she thinks she's right."

"Oh, haven't I?" Dick Garner interrupted with a tender, reminiscent smile on his pale face.

"Well, maybe you do. If so, it'll make what I have to say easier. You convinced her you were not badly hurt. She knew I'd take care of you, and she's gone to stake that claim while the staking is good."

"By gosh, Joe, I believe you are right. To me, she's always seemed like——"

"A nice little sweetheart who needed your protection," Joe interrupted. "Well, she stampeded with her dad when she was fifteen and knows all angles of the game. Besides, Tip's with her. But I'm taking no chances. If it's possible for you to be left alone, I'm taking the trail right now. Let's have a look at that wound!"

"Hang the wound, Joe. If she's in trouble, go!"

"No, not unless I'm convinced you're in condition to be left. Tip's with her, and that means a lot to me." Then Joe Hardy examined the wound.

Tip was tired, but his conscience was clear. Joe Hardy had told him to remain with the girl and when she loaded

a pack onto his back and ordered him to follow her, he obeyed. Tip rather liked women and little children. Their hands and their words were soft—different from men. The malemute always responded to their advances, even though Joe kept him muzzled when there was any chance of people of Oriental blood being in the vicinity. An Oriental had once abused Tip, and he had never forgotten it. Children regarded his muzzle as they might a collar. They sensed it was not needed. On this night he was not muzzled.

Rather contentedly, he watched the girl prepare camp. She seemed to know exactly what she was doing. Like a true sour dough, her first thought had been of the dog. She examined his feet, petted him a bit, then gave him a dried salmon. Next she mixed up a batch of sour dough biscuits and baked them before an open fire. While the evening meal was cooking, she prepared to settle down for the night. Her face was serious, yet even disturbing thoughts could not mar its beauty. Once she spoke aloud:

"Perhaps I should go back. Maybe Dick was badly hit. But no, when I looked back quickly he smiled and waved his hand." But she did not know that he had collapsed later.

She was sipping tea mechanically, her thoughts back in Joe Hardy's cabin, so she did not see a number of men approach the camp and study it from a convenient ridge. "Two of us had better slip down," the leader muttered, "four might make too much noise. I'll be one. Solaski, you go with me. 'Dutch,' you see that no one approaches. We'll start now. The wind will keep the dog from scenting us if we come in from the other side."

Dutch climbed into a convenient tree. One could never tell who might be abroad during these brief nights.

Slowly the two approached the camp and the lone girl. Tip was sleeping. Solaski drew his automatic pistol. "I can drop the dog!" he whispered.

"We dropped a man to-day," the leader answered, "that's enough, particularly as we didn't get what we were after. It's still and the report would carry far. Get a club, bang the dog across the nose, and I'll handle the girl. Ready?"

Solaski found a club that suited his purpose, then at a signal from his leader bounded into the open. The girl did not cry out. Instead her hand dropped to her holster in which rested a small caliber pistol. Instantly it was caught and twisted until she cried out. The method was particularly cruel, the leader forcing the hand upward until it was almost up to her neck.

As for Tip, he leaped, then everything went black, and Solaski's club came down across his sensitive nose. The dog dropped silently, yet in the brief interval between his sensing danger, and the blow, Tip had caught an enemy scent that would always linger with him. "Got the dog, Nashby," the man cried, "now what!"

"Search the girl!"

"You'd better pass over that map, miss, or I'll hunt for it until I find it." His eyes gleamed. There was no hint of respect in his attitude. "I guess I know about where to look!" he added.

For the first time Ethel spoke. "It is now two to one, and the one is a girl. I'm no fool. I've been on the frontier too long not to know when some one has the drop on me. Let go of my hand, and I'll give you the map." She turned her back on them, and a moment later handed Nashby a thin, folded square of paper. Then, ignoring them completely she turned her attention to Tip.

Nashby and his companion returned to the spot where they had left Dutch and a shifty-eyed individual called "Slim" on guard. "Well, we've got it," the leader announced, "now it is up to us to clear out while the clearing is

good. There's no telling what the girl will do."

"She'll beat it to the nearest bunch of miners for help," Dutch ventured.

"And find them too busy to pay much attention to her," Nashby added.

With the map to go by, progress was easy. Brush had overgrown all markings left by Goodman years before. While the others were searching for ancient shafts to guide them, Nashby and his trio of confederates were going direct. Under a clump of brush they found the first monument left by Goodman. Within two hours they had located the others and replaced them with markings of their own. "Slim, you can cover the most ground in the least time. It's up to you to head for the land office and file on this stuff. The rest of us will stick right here and keep off claim jumpers. And another thing, Slim, keep away from cabins. I know you like to sleep in a soft bunk, but the ground is better now, considering all things."

Slim groaned. "If I have a good night's rest each day I can make better time. Well, I'll be going. Ought to make one of Joe Hardy's cabins by tonight." This last was purely mental.

Within an hour after Slim's departure Nashby suddenly covered a party of men with a rifle. "Too late, gents," he informed them, "this claim is staked!"

"We aren't figuring on jumping your claim," one of them replied, "just want to pass through!"

"You'd better go around!" Nashby suggested. At this point a broken ridge joined a mountain some five thousand feet in elevation. To reach the country beyond it was necessary to use a pass less than five hundred yards in width. It was along here that Nasby had placed his men.

"It's about ten miles——" the other objected.

"Sure, but we're taking no chances. This is as good as our property right now. It's private. Of course if you want to fight your way through——"

The men withdrew, conversed in low tones, then with dark glances toward the hidden men retraced their steps. This was unfair. Before the day was over several other parties had been turned back. The day brought no sign of the girl, however. The men built a fire in a secluded spot and took turns in resting and guarding.

By night they had taken advantage of Ethel Garner, and by night she prepared to return the compliment. Inch by inch she crawled up the ridge, endeavoring to remember the general lay of the land from childhood experiences, A low growl from Tip informed her that one enemy could not be far away. She silenced the dog, then worked her way to the top and peered down. She saw the dull glow of the fire against the trees and rocks, but no men. While she debated the situation, Tip indicated a desire to start something. His nose told him what her eyes could not see. Solaski was directly ahead. She heard voices, laughter, then Nashby's sullen tones.

"It's death to claim jumpers when men are warmed up by the excitement. That's why they turned back. Others will turn back. If we have to shoot—shoot to kill. I did it once, and I guess you fellows can do it."

Ethel Garner knew they had the present advantage. Possession is nine points of the law in the mining country. Tip, however was not hampered by legal knowledge. He believed in direct action and, when he suddenly stalked toward a clump of brush, the girl followed. "It is our by rights," she told herself, "and—if I only had a gun or something." Had she been a man, undoubtedly she would have resorted to barehanded methods.

Solaski's nervous ear caught the snapping of a twig. As it was close he dropped the rifle and drew his pistol.

"Stick 'em up!" he ordered harshly, "got you covered!"

It was bluff, pure and simple. As no answer came he repeated the command, then crouched even lower. There was something sinister about the silence. He seemed to know he was threatened by animal rather than man danger. Again the faint protest of disturbed brush came to his ears; almost on the instant he caught the reflected light of peering eyes. He tossed up the weapon and fired. The eyes seemed to soar into the air, and the next instant Tip was upon him. Again the dog relied on the training Joe Hardy had patiently given him. The great jaws snapped on Solaski's wrist and in that second he paid for the brutal blow across Tip's nose. The bone in his wrist almost cracked from the pressure, the pistol fell from his hand. To his surprise Tip did not renew the attack. Instead he picked up the pistol between his teeth and slipped into the brush. A moment later Solaski fled before the menace of his own weapon and the cool words of the girl.

"Take him, Tip!" she ordered, and the dog bounded in pursuit. Dutch and Nashby were coming on the run. Each had drawn his weapon and was ready for almost anything. In this battle Nashby did not consider sex, but fired quickly, though he knew it was a girl and not a man he was facing. At the third shot his automatic jammed, and the yellow deep within the man's being came to the surface.

"Dutch! Solaski!" he screamed in terror, then fled.

Ethel heard him crashing through the brush; something thick and heavy snapped, a high-pitched cry from the man, then silence.

Solaski peered down apprehensively from a convenient tree; Dutch was peering wildly about seeking Tip's point of attack. Stolid, brutal and slow-thinking, yet he realized the dog knew not the meaning of quit. A branch snapped, and he swung to cover the spot. "Don't shoot, but drop that gun!" Dutch obeyed, and the girl emerged and picked up the weapon. "You are yellow," she said coolly appraising him. "Brave in victory, whining in defeat. You've got twenty-four hours to clear out of the country, and you'd better start right now while my dog is occupied."

"Yes'm! Yes'm!" Dutch answered nervously, "I'm leaving. Don't let him get away from you!"

Her lips curling in amused contempt she watched the big man stumble hurriedly away.

There was the catlike Solaski to consider. "Tip!" she called, "here, Tip!"

A growl answered her. She ran toward the sound and found Solaski perched in a tree. "Come down," she ordered, threatening him with his own gun.

"You won't shoot!" he answered calmly. "You are a woman, and the thought of killing a man up a tree goes against your grain." Tip waited, tense.

Solaski had called the turn and knew it. Ethel left Tip at the tree and returned with an axe. For several moments the chips flew; a puff of wind swayed the tree and the trunk cracked. "I'll come! Call off the dog!" He descended with caution, evidently doubting the girl's ability to restrain the dog. His face paled as Tip's nose was thrust against his leg. Tip was trembling in his eagerness. "Now what are you going to do with me?"

"Turn you over to the authorities," she answered, "for shooting my husband, for robbing me of a map. I am sorry your precious leader vanished."

Solaski looked at the girl, then at the dog, then he lighted a cigarette and leaned against a tree. It was to be a game of watchful waiting all right. Presently the girl seated herself, holding her hand on the pistol and commenced to sleep. She had just about reached the limit of her endurance. Tip

slept, too, yet whenever Solaski made a move Tip's right eye opened in warning.

Hours passed, then dawn and the tramping of many feet. Solaski leaped to his feet and grinned. At the head of a group of determined men came Nashby. Evidently he had used his ability to talk to the utmost. He had won this crowd, no doubt. "Of course I respect a woman," he was saying, "but she can't jump a man's claim and hide behind her sex!"

A man stepped out. "Miss, who got here first?"

"He did, but——"

"Buts don't count much during a stampede, you and your dog are claim jumpers. Have you been in Alaska long?"

"Long enough to know mining camp law," she answered. "That man stole my map and——"

"I did not, did I, Solaski?"

"No, sir," Solaski answered, "this dog jumped our claim and she egged him on. He put me up a tree and ripped my arm."

"And ran me until I fell down an old mine shaft. He's vicious and should be destroyed," interrupted Nashby, at the same time drawing his gun.

"Try it!" The girl seemed determined on that point.

The atmosphere was growing tense. The girl was in no danger, but Tip was. She could see that this particular group did not represent the best mining thought in the country. The seconds ticked by, during which she placed herself between Nashby and Tip.

The tenseness was broken by the clumping of heavy boots, and Dutch was literally kicked into the scene. Behind him stood Lonehand Conner. "Found this cuss running around scared stiff, and remembering a shot I heard down near Joe Hardy's cabin, a shot I was too busy stampeding to investigate, I scare this cuss some more and he talked—freely. Nashby, will you and Solaski take a chance with me, a self-appointed United States marshal, and go to town for trial, or will you take a chance on an old-fashioned miners' court, with me as judge?"

"What charge?"

"Ambushing Dick Garner, this young lady's husband!"

"Miners' trial!" suddenly shouted a voice in the rear, "miners' trial!" The cry was taken up. Somehow they knew Lonehand had the evidence.

"Don't let 'em get me!" shouted Nashby.

"I'll do my best not to," answered Lonehand, "but you put something over on 'em and it doesn't set well."

"Tip!" It was the girl who spoke. She had drawn her weapon and was standing beside Lonehand. Tip's bared fangs held a menace as great as the guns. Thus they stood, an old miner, a girl and a dog. Lonehand's eyes narrowed; he knew gold-maddened men. "Tip's got the black sheep of this flock rounded up," he said, "you men had better hurry on and stake your claims; dawn's breaking and there's plenty in the back country for those who hurry. We'll be going now to turn over our prisoners to the marshal and to file our claims."

"Need a posse, Lonehand?" called a voice.

"Nope!" he jerked his gun toward Tip, "this here claim jumper is posse enough for me. Come along, Ethel, I got a hunch your man is going to get well. A stampeder tells me he got the drop on a feller named Slim, who seemed in a right smart hurry to get to town." He turned to the prisoners. "All right, mush on. You're next, Tip. Step lively gents, there. That's about the pace, thanks."

Lonehand, Ethel and Tip turned toward town, each content in their way; Ethel and Lonehand had struck it, and Tip had served the humans he loved.

The Beloved Fugitive

—By—

Edward Leonard

Author of "The Half-breed's Creed," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHOT IN THE DARK.

HE stood on a stringpiece a few feet above where the water was lapping the bulkheads and proceeded to investigate his pockets. The only thing he found in them, of the least interest to him, was a fifty-cent piece. This was all the money Johnnie Henderson had in the world. He was out of a job. There was no other job in sight. Only this half dollar stood between him and starvation. And he was hungry already.

"Huh!" he grunted as he pulled out the coin and stared at it ruefully in the dim light. "A fine guy, me! Pretty close to being a bum. I been on this earth twenty-seven years, and all I got to show for it is fifty cents. Some record!"

In front of him the North River rolled by under a star-studded sky. Far off on a hazy shore shone dimly the lights of Hoboken, where he was born. "Hoboken Johnnie," he was called sometimes. As often as not the name was spoken with a touch of pity, or contempt, or derision. For Hoboken Johnnie was known as a failure, a shiftless drifter without aim or ambition. Yet, unknown to anybody but himself, ambition had burned deep in his soul now and then with a fitful, uncertain flame; it had flared up and flickered and gone out again and again. There had never been enough of it to thoroughly stir his big, lazy body into displaying such energy or perseverance.

A heavy cloud of depression had settled upon Hoboken Johnnie. The river was beckoning to him. The gurgling eddies of its black tide seemed to be crooning their desire to end his troubles forever. For a few moments his lazy blue eyes watched them. Though there were six feet and two inches of Hoboken Johnnie, mostly bone and muscle, he was a poor swimmer. The current was swift and strong. He had heard that drowning was an easy death. Suddenly his body stiffened, and he drew back with a quick catch of his breath.

"Gee!" he gasped out. "I ain't that yaller. A big, healthy stiff like me doing a fool trick like that! Whatsa matter with me, anyhow? I gotta buck up."

Behind him the towering buildings of downtown Manhattan were stippled with thousands of pin points of light. Turning, he stared at them sullenly and shrugged his broad shoulders. The city seemed like a mighty enemy ar-

rayed against him in the shadows of the night.

"The big town's got me!" he growled. "I can't beat it. It's pushin' me down and out. I ain't no good—never was. A fine guy, me!"

At a point some distance away on the broad river-front thoroughfare, a slim, swarthy little man known to the police as "Blackie" Muller, a specialist in silks, had been watching Hoboken Johnnie thoughtfully for several minutes, and was now coming slowly toward him.

"Say, Hoboken, I hear yer out of a job again," he remarked in a low tone as he drew close.

"Yeah," Johnnie admitted listlessly. "What of it? It ain't worrying you, is it?"

"You broke?" persisted Muller, eying furtively the round, boyish face of the young man who towered head and shoulders above him.

"Well, I ain't figuring on buying a car just yet. What's biting you, Blackie? Sumpin' on your mind?"

For a moment Blackie Muller was silent, apparently absorbed in thought. "How'd yuh like t'pick up some easy money?" he suggested presently. "A coupla guys and meself have a job on fer to-night, and we're lookin' fer some good fella like you t'help us."

Just as he had done from the temptation of the river, Hoboken Johnnie stiffened and drew back with a little catch of his breath. "Going to tap another silk warehouse, eh, Blackie? But you're up against the wrong guy. I may be broke, but I ain't no crook. Easy money sounds good, but I've got no hankerin' to go up the river for a stretch."

Blackie Muller gave a contemptuous sniff. "I know you ain't a nervy guy, bo, but there ain't no danger in this job a-tall. We run the truck into a black alley when the cop's clear at the other end o' the beat, and then we work fast and quiet. There's fifty thousand dollars' worth o' stuff waitin' fer us. You get a thousand bucks just fer givin' us a hand liftin' out some o' the goods. Don't be a dumb-bell, bo. Use yer head. You're broke, and y'need the money."

"A thousand bucks!" whispered Hoboken Johnnie. That was more than ten times as much money as he had ever had in his life. The thought of it bewildered him. His fingers clutched nervously at the fifty-cent piece in his pocket. The solitary coin was more aggravating than if he had been absolutely penniless, for it was a constant, tangible reminder of his forlorn condition. "There's—there's no danger of getting pinched?" he stammered.

"Ab-so-lutely none a-tall," Muller assured him. "A few minutes fast work, and y'clean up as much money as y'ever made in a year. Take it or leave it. When I offer a guy a soft thing like that, I ain't goin' t'waste any time coaxin' him."

Once more Hoboken Johnnie clutched his half dollar. A lump rose in his throat and he swallowed it hard. His lazy blue eyes turned again to the towering city that seemed bent on his destruction. "All right," he gasped out. "I—guess I'll—take a chance."

Three hours later he was riding on a motor truck through silent, deserted streets. His only companion was Muller, who was driving. Already Hoboken Johnnie regretted he had heeded the voice of the tempter. Not only fear, but his conscience, troubled him. Even the prospect of possessing a thousand dollars brought no consolation.

"The guys'll be waitin' fer us," Muller explained. "They've got in through the roof, and they'll have a side door open an' everythin' ready. All we gotta do is t'lift the stuff out. Pretty soft, eh? Beats workin' yer fingers sore fer twenty or thirty a week, eh? You travel with me, bo, an' you'll be

wearin' di'monds an' livin' easy. Burglar alarms? Why, say, kid, they're a joke. I know how t'fix them things. And they ain't hardly worth thinkin' about anyhow. Did y'ever see a cop runnin' when he hears one? Nix! He don't even walk fast. There's too many of 'em goin' off eve'y night by accident. They don't mean nothin' once outa twenty times."

The experienced thief's air of easy confidence failed to reassure his nervous companion, who shook his head sadly and muttered, "I wish now I'd had sense enough to keep outa this."

"You'll change yer mind, kid, when yer feel a thousand bucks in yer fingers," said Muller as he turned the car into a narrow alley running beside a huge, dark warehouse whose many windows were covered by iron doors.

The car stopped, a shadowy figure drew near to them. "We got the place opened up all right, Blackie," came a whispering voice. "And we got the stuff down on the ground floor here all ready t'load. Get busy now. We gotta work fast."

Every nerve in Hoboken Johnnie's big body was quivering as he followed Muller and his companion into the building. For a moment it was too dark to see anything at all. Then through the inky blackness shot the thin, white beam of an electric torch. Pointing like a spectral finger, it shifted slowly to and fro, casting fitful spotlights on the bare, rough walls, on iron shutters tightly closed, coming presently to rest on a row of packing cases not far from the door through which they had entered. Then the light went out.

"Whazza matter?" Muller whispered hoarsely, sensing danger but hearing not a sound.

"Shut yer mouth!" came a tense but barely audible voice. "There's some-b'dy out'n the alley."

Hoboken Johnnie's blood ran cold. "Gee!" he whispered to himself as he swept a hand across his perspiring forehead. "Gee! I wish I was outa this."

Very cautiously Muller stole toward the door. Abruptly he drew back, evidently thoroughly alarmed. Through a few seconds of dreadful silence Hoboken Johnnie scarcely breathed. Then suddenly a figure loomed in the doorway. There was just light enough to reveal the uniform of a policeman. He was crouching forward with his gun raised menacingly, when the dead silence was broken by the crack of a shot from the deep darkness inside. The officer in the doorway staggered and fell forward to the floor.

There was a rush of feet in the dark, four men darted out into the alley and leaped for the truck. Muller, cursing savagely, was starting the engine when a police whistle sounded in the cross street ahead of them. In the narrow alley there was no space to turn the car around, and in front their escape was evidently cut off. Backing out would be slow work. That only one chance remained for them was obvious. They must desert the car and trust to the speed of their legs.

"Beat it, youse guys!" cried Muller as he sprang down from the seat. "It's the chair now fer all of us if we're pinched!"

With Hoboken Johnnie following close at his heels, he ran for the street from which they had entered. From behind them the whistle was shrieking again its shrill alarm. Presently the discovery that he had lost his hat added to Hoboken Johnnie's terror. The police would find it. His initials were stamped in the lining. It might be evidence enough to convict him of murder. Even now his dazed mind could understand it wouldn't be necessary to prove he had fired the shot. If the policeman was dead, every one of the four men he had trapped could be sent to the chair. It would have been bet-

ter, he felt, if he had acted on the desperate impulse of a few hours ago to throw himself into the river.

By the time his breath gave out he found himself alone. Blackie Muller and the other two fugitives had evidently found it wiser to scatter into different directions. For a moment he stood still, glaring wildly up and down the brightly lighted avenue in which his flight had brought him. His breath was coming and going in short, wheezy gasps. Perspiration was pouring down his face. Passers-by stared at the big, hatless, exhausted young man curiously. Realizing he was attracting altogether too much attention for his own safety he moved on into the nearest cross street.

A few minutes later he came, just off Tenth Avenue, to the shabby rooming house where he lived. Wearily he climbed the four flights of stairs that led to his barely furnished little room. Even here he felt no sense of security. In his wild flight from the alley he had passed many people. Reason told him the police might be already on his trail. They would be looking for a big, hatless man. And they would have his hat. They would have the initials of his name. Perhaps they would get some of the others and they'd turn state's evidence. It seemed not unlikely that they would be able to trace him even to this house, for his breathless, perspiring condition must have attracted some attention from neighbors.

For half an hour he pondered over the perplexing situation. He was afraid to remain where he was and afraid to go out. His slow mind failed to decide the problem. At last he stepped to the window and peered cautiously out. For a while he could see nothing alarming, but after a few moments a policeman came around the corner from the avenue. Johnnie pulled in his head and shivered. After a moment he ventured to take another cautious look into the street. The policeman was now directly below his window and was turning to the door of the house.

Johnnie gave a startled gasp. "He's coming for me!" he said with a groan. "I gotta beat it outa here fast."

Desperately he swept a swift glance around the room, trying to decide what he prized most to take with him in his flight, for he knew he would never dare to return. There was little enough to choose from—nothing at all of any pecuniary value. His eyes fastened on a faded photograph standing against the mirror of his dilapidated bureau. It was a likeness of his mother, who had died when he was a small boy. He reached out quickly for the picture, slipped it into one of his pockets and rushed for the door.

In the hall he paused for an instant to listen. Two or three flights below somebody was ascending with heavy footsteps. There was only one staircase, and the roof seemed to offer the only chance of escape. He ran to the rear of the hall, climbed a ladder, pushed up a trapdoor and came out on the flat top of the building. Crossing it, he pulled himself up to the next roof, which stood a few feet higher. He made his way over the block, now climbing to one roof, now dropping to another, until he came to a fire escape which led down into an alley. The alley was dark and deserted. and he clambered down the ladders. They brought him to within eight feet of the ground. Hanging by his hands from the lowest round of the last ladder, his long body came so close to spanning the remaining distance that the drop to the bottom was easy.

Here he recollected that he was without a hat. The police were surely looking for a big man without a hat, and he dared not venture into the street. He reasoned that after a few hours, it would be safer. The man

hunt would not be pushed so hard by that time. The night police force would be off the beats. Their successors would not be thinking quite so insistently about a big man without a hat. Looking about for a refuge for the remainder of the night, he found at the blind end of the alley an empty packing case with one side torn out. It was a shelter that was scarcely to his liking, but he managed to curl himself up inside without much discomfort. Here for a few hours at least, he would be safe.

"Gee! The big town has sure got me!" he mused as he lay blinking into the lonely darkness. "Who'd 'a' thought a few hours ago that a poor, harmless guy like me'd be in danger o' the chair. Murder! That's what they're after me for. I didn't have no gun, but that wouldn't make no diff'rence with a judge or a jury. I was one o' the gang, and all four of us have gotta share the blame. Who was it fired the shot? I dunno. Blackie Muller, maybe. But it don't make no diff'rence who it was, for I'm a murderer in the eyes o' the law, if that cop is dead."

The dull roar of the city was in his ears and was lulling his weary, troubled mind to sleep. As he closed his eyes he slipped a hand into his pocket, and his big fingers closed tightly on his mother's picture. It was some consolation to know he had rescued that treasure in his flight.

"Yeah," he murmured drowsily; "I got the photo—and a half a dollar. Things mighta been worse."

CHAPTER II.

THE PRISONER.

SAFE and snug in the packing box, Hoboken Johnnie slept much longer than he had expected to. When he awoke, strings of laundry were hanging across the alley. He knew that housewives were not likely to be that far along with the wash until long after breakfast time. He was without a watch, but to a sharply observant person in familiar surroundings, a timepiece is scarcely a necessity. From the position of the shadows at the end of the alley and from various other signs the neighborhood presented, he judged that it must be ten o'clock or later. There was no reason to be alarmed by the lateness of the hour. The streets had probably grown safer for him. People had had time to forget about the search for a big man without a hat.

For a few moments he lay blinking up at tenement windows and the flapping clothes on the laundry lines before he could quite convince himself that he was really a hunted outlaw, and that what had happened in the warehouse was more than a dream.

"It's true all right," he decided as he crept out of the box. "I knew the big town was goin' t'get me some time. It's too hard a burg fer poor dumb guys like me to buck up against. And it's sure got me now fer fair."

From a near-by window came an odor of cooking. He sniffed at it longingly, for he was as hungry as a wolf. Though there was no definite plan in his head of what he was going to do, he was thinking of spending his half dollar at a restaurant, but a hat was even more necessary than a meal. The half dollar might buy a cap somewhere, but that would mean starvation. In this quandary he stole cautiously out of the alley. The street frightened him. As he made his way into Tenth Avenue he had a feeling that every passer-by was staring at him with suspicion, that the groups of women and children in tenement doorways were pointing him out, that the whole neighborhood was beginning to buzz with gossip about the big man without a hat.

Suddenly at Eleventh Avenue, panic seized him as he caught sight of a policeman half a block away. "He's

spotted me!" he muttered, breaking into a run.

Though perhaps until that instant the officer had taken no more than indifferent notice of the strapping, bareheaded young man, he now started in pursuit. "Hey, you!" he called. "Come back here!" When the fugitive failed to stop he blew his whistle. The piercing blast added speed to Hoboken Johnnie's long legs. Desperately he looked about for a hiding place. Steadily lengthening the gap between himself and his pursuer, he came after a few moments to a row of freight cars standing on a siding. The door of one of them was open. Discovering that nobody was in sight at the moment and that the policeman was too far away to see him, he climbed inside.

A frenzied effort to pull the heavy, sliding door shut failed, and, not daring to struggle with it any longer, he swept his gaze over the interior of the car. The place was almost filled with freight. Huge shipping boxes, packed closely together, rose to the roof and left only a few feet of open floor space. He discovered, however, that at one point between the boxes and the roof was an opening large enough to conceal even a man as big as himself. The binding strips of the boxes offered just enough hold for his fingers and toes to make it possible to climb up to this place of refuge.

He had barely made the climb and crept in between the boxes and the roof when he heard running footsteps. They passed on and died away; Hoboken Johnnie began to breathe again.

Yet he did not dare move. The policeman might be coming back. Or some passer-by might chance to glance in at the open door of the car. He would have to remain where he was until the excitement the chase must have stirred up in the neighborhood had died down. In fact he decided presently that it would not be wise to come out by daylight at all. He was too thoroughly frightened to be willing to take more risks than were absolutely necessary.

Though the hard tops of the boxes were far from comfortable and it was stifling hot under the sun-baked roof, time dragged on and on without bringing him enough courage to stir. Even the pangs of hunger failed to prevail over the paralyzing effect produced by thoughts of the electric chair at Sing Sing. The least he could expect if captured would be a long term in prison.

Hours must have passed, when he was startled by the voices of two men at the door.

"Close 'er up and seal 'er, Bill," said one of them. "She's all ready to travel."

The big door rumbled along its grooves and closed with a jarring bang. Abruptly the interior of the car became dark and silent. Then in panic Hoboken Johnnie came scrambling down from the boxes. "Gee!" he gasped out. "They're sealin' her up! And I'm in here like a trapped rat!"

Indistinctly he could hear the two men talking to each other just outside the door. After a few moments their voices died away and there was only the faint roar of street traffic. At last, breaking out of this subdued, continuous sound, came the heavy tolling of a bell, and he knew an electric freight engine was making its slow way down the avenue. Presently this pealing warning stopped.

A few minutes later the car gave a jolt that almost threw him off his feet. A few more moments passed, and the car, after another violent jerk, began to move on. Again the big bell was tolling steadily. Though Johnnie Henderson didn't know where he was going, there could be no doubt that he was on his way to somewhere.

Many hours passed—even days per-

haps, for he had no way of even roughly estimating the passing time, except by the increasing torments of hunger and thirst. At last his sufferings drove him to desperation. During one of the car's frequent stops, he began to beat madly on the door with his fists and his feet, while he shouted at the top of his voice for help. Freight yards being noisy places, the muffled sounds from the tightly closed car were drowned in the general din of rumbling wheels, of roaring engines and toiling bells. Then he began to realize that without food or water, he might die in torture long before coming to the end of his enforced travels. He had heard of freight cars that traveled for weeks and months without being opened.

After a long wait, the car continued its journey. It seemed an interminable time before it came to another stop. Here he made another desperate effort to attract attention, with the same result. He could remember now that he had read in the newspapers of men trapped in freight cars, who had stayed there for many days before being discovered. Their efforts to make themselves heard had been as futile as his own. There is nothing flimsy about the wall of a car. It is thick and sturdy and tight, and sounds fail to penetrate it readily.

It was thirst now that was harder to endure than hunger, for the air was hot and stifling. His throat seemed on fire; his lips were dry and cracking. The torture was almost maddening. He would have been willing to spend half his life in prison for a few drops of water.

His sufferings produced a sharpening effect on his wits. Suddenly it occurred to him that somewhere in all the mass of freight that was stored around him he might find something that would relieve the torments of thirst. There was no possibility, he knew, of finding any kind of fresh fruit among the shipments, for that traveled only in refrigerator cars. But he might find something else—something that was liquid or juicy or cooling.

With eyes that had long ago accustomed themselves to the semi-darkness, he swept an appraising gaze over the boxes. They didn't look very hopeful. He struck a match. Some of the boxes bore the names of clothing manufacturers, which was sufficient indication of what they contained. It seemed to be a mixed shipment that was being sent to a general store. Judging from its labels, one box contained hardware and offered not the slightest encouragement to a man who was in danger of dying from hunger and thirst. It was perched up under the roof; next to it was a smaller box which bore no markings on its exposed side. Johnnie clambered up to take a closer look at it. Its top was only six inches from the roof of the car, and he had to do a good deal of maneuvering before he was able to read the label pasted on it. Again he struck a match. "Yarmouth bloaters!" He spoke the name as if it sickened him. He was starving, but his appetite balked at the thought of salt fish.

Though the heat up under the sun-baked roof was almost unendurable. he wormed his way along over the boxes, reading their labels as he passed, and pausing now and then to strike one of the paper matches he had found in his clothes.

Suddenly a wild cry broke from his parched lips. "Canned tomatoes!" There was plenty of thirst-quenching juice in cans of tomatoes. The specter of death faded out of his imagination. He believed he was saved. The next moment he was not so sure, for it had not occurred to him until now that shipping boxes are not made to be opened with bare hands. And this box marked "tomatoes" was very strongly put together. He needed a hammer

and a chisel for such a job, and he hadn't even a pocketknife.

Despair worked a miracle with Hoboken Johnnie's lazy mind. It was changed by his hours of torment into a much more capable thinking machine than he had ever dreamed of possessing. He thought now of the box that bore the name of a hardware firm. Just what it contained he had no means of knowing. but almost any kind of hardware might serve him as a tool in this emergency. With his bare hands he couldn't get at the canned tomatoes, but, though this hardware box was just as stoutly put together as any of the others, he believed he had discovered a way of getting into it. Exerting all the force of his big muscles, he pushed it slowly inch by inch from the box on which it rested. There was a sheer drop of eight feet to the floor of the car, and presently it toppled and fell with a terrific crash.

An eight-foot drop of a box weighing at least one hundred and fifty pounds is enough to start the strongest of fastenings. Clambering down to where it had fallen, he discovered that its heavy nails had been loosened perceptibly. Yet it still held firm against his frantic efforts to tear it open.

Hoboken Johnnie's six feet and two inches of bone and muscle were quivering from the strain of the struggle, but he was not ready to give up. If he had got to die, he would die fighting. He tilted the box up on one of its corners. Crouching down, he got a shoulder under it, and, with a mighty heave as he staggered up to his feet, raised it to his full height. Bang! The box dropped again to the floor.

This time the nails were loosened a little more; but not enough. Though he felt himself growing weak and faint, he managed to repeat the operation. Another terrific crash. One of the binding strips sprang out half an inch from its fastenings. Again he struggled with his fingers to loosen the boards. After a long, hard effort he succeeded in tearing two of them off.

Thrilling with suspense, for he knew his life depended on what he was going to find, he reached in for the contents. His heart sank. Nails! Big nails, little nails—nothing—nothing but nails!

In a frenzy of despair he dragged out everything in the box. It was hopeless. Nails! Nothing but nails! It seemed as if death had drawn a little closer to Hoboken Johnnie.

"But I ain't done for yet!" he gasped out with cracking lips. "If I gotta die I'm goin' t'pass out fightin' and with my fingers tearin' at a box."

For a few moments he stood glaring down at the nails of all sizes he had strewn over the floor. He picked up one of the biggest of them and studied it thoughtfully. Even such a clumsy tool would be better than his fingers, he decided, and he climbed up with it to the box marked "Tomatoes." With the big nail he began to gouge into the soft wood around one of the small nails that held the box together. It was slow work; a long time passed before he had exposed enough of the imbedded nail to get a firm grip on it with his fingers. With a long, hard pull he managed to draw it out. Then he began to scrape the wood away from another. Hours must have passed before he at last succeeded in tearing out one of the boards.

The label on the box had told the truth. The next moment he had gouged a nail into the head of a tomato can and was quenching his thirst with great, choking gulps. He drained another can, and another.

With a gasp of relief, he was ready for more hard work with the big nail. The pangs of hunger were growing sharper. Thoughts of salt fish were pleasant now, and he turned his attention to the box of Yarmouth bloaters.

The wood was hard and tough, and its wire nails, driven close together through heavy binding boards, were long and stubborn.

Starvation and strenuous effort had weakened him. Perspiration was streaming down his face, and he was breathing heavily. The stifling air of the tightly closed car made him feel dizzy and sick as he scraped at the wood. It was almost as slow a process as the filing of iron. Every now and then he was compelled to stop for rest. About a nail an hour was his guess at the progress he was making, and he decided nails must have been cheap at Yarmouth, for they had been used prodigally by whoever had packed these bloaters. By the time he got the box open he was a thoroughly exhausted man. The meal of salt fish, washed down with warm tomato juice, put new strength into his big body and stirred him to further effort.

Before many more hours had passed he had discovered other kinds of food in the freight—sardines and canned beans. No longer was there any great danger of dying from thirst or starvation.

After this he kept count of the days and nights, for he could tell when it was daytime by the tiny streaks of sunlight that crept in through crevices around the door. How many days had passed already he had failed to notice while half mad with thirst and hunger. Now, when the little rays of light around the door faded away and he knew it had grown dark outside he gouged a line with a nail on one of the boxes.

Twelve of these lines had been marked on the box, when, after the car had been standing still for a long time, he heard somebody at the door. His nerves began to quiver. With straining ears he listened to the voices of men. They were about to open the car.

CHAPTER III.

A DASH FOR FREEDOM.

AS the door of the car slid open, Hoboken Johnnie leaped. A man outside gave a startled yell and dodged just in time to save himself from being bowled over. Johnnie didn't stop to apologize. He felt quite certain no friendly welcome was waiting for him considering the mess he had made of the freight, and he had decided not to waste any time trying to explain matters.

He ran along the platform of a small station and passed on into a dusty road. From behind him came a roar of voices. Ahead stood a short row of small stores and around them a few scattered houses and shacks. Beyond this little settlement rose a mighty wall of snow-tipped mountains.

In front of one of the stores a sorrel horse, with an empty saddle, was dozing in the hot sun. The reins had been tossed over its head and were hanging to the ground. The horse seemed to offer the fugitive his only chance of escape.

The voices behind him were coming nearer. A man came out of a restaurant doorway. He caught sight of the running stranger and stood staring with wild eyes. For Hoboken Johnnie was a startling sight. His thick, dark hair, which had not been combed or brushed or washed for at least two weeks, was matter and tousled. His face, haggard, wan with a prison pallor, was partly covered with a half-inch growth of scrubby beard. His collar was wilted and almost black. No hobo of quite such a disreputable appearance had drifted into this town in years.

Hoboken Johnnie made a bee line for the horse. Picking up the reins, he swung his long body into the big Mexican saddle and kicked a heel into the animal's ribs. The horse gave a startled jump and broke into a run.

Johnny clung on. Once he had held a brief job in a livery stable, and he was not unacquainted with horses.

"Hey, you!" cried a man. "That ain't your hoss. Come back here."

Hoboken Johnnie had no time to waste in argument. So far as the matter of the horse was concerned, neither fear of the law nor his conscience troubled him. The idea didn't enter his mind that he was stealing the animal. His only thought was to make good his escape from his pursuers. He didn't know where he was going and didn't care, so long as he outdistanced the yelling men behind him. In fact the sorrel was choosing the direction. Naturally under such conditions it was heading straight for home, wherever that might be.

The voices of the men died away. Presently the town dropped out of sight. All around him were bare, open, rolling ranges except close in the west, where from gray ramparts of broken rock rose the blue, snow-tipped mountains—like a bank of storm clouds. The clear, dry mountain air, scented with pine, was like a powerful tonic to the man who had been living so long in the hot, stifling car. The blood ran fresher in his veins. Life seemed worth living again. He had almost forgotten that back in New York at this very hour the police might be searching for him, with a charge of murder.

"I dunno where I am," he gasped out to himself, as he clung awkwardly to the rocking saddle, "but it's the big West; there ain't no doubt o' that. Gee! Just looka them mountains! Some country!"

The road was turning westward. The pine-covered foothills, the precipitious walls of rock at their base, the deep, shadowy gulches, were growing more and more distinct with every moment. The sun was sinking behind the caps of snow on the high summits of the peaks and a sudden coolness crept into the scented air.

It was beginning to grow dark when he caught sight of a mellow light shining from close to the foot of the hills. The sorrel pricked up his ears and moved a little faster. Presently a low ranch house, with outlying sheds and a corral, emerged from the gathering shadows.

As he rode nearer a pretty, brown-haired, brown-eyed girl came to the door of the house and looked out at him. Her face clouded and her dark eyebrows came together in a little, puzzled frown.

"Where did you get that horse, stranger?" she called as he pulled the sorrel up a few feet from the door. "What's happened to Jed?"

For a moment Hoboken Johnnie was unable to decide on an answer. Swinging out of the saddle, he slipped the reins over his arm and led the sorrel to the door. The rider's long legs were limp and wabbly. He was stiff and sore. But he was not thinking about himself.

The girl held him spellbound. He was staring at her with his lazy blue eyes full of frank admiration. He had forgotten how disreputable his appearance must be and failed to understand why suddenly she drew back from him with a frightened gasp.

"I—I dunno who Jed is," he stammered.

"You don't know Jed?" cried the girl. "Then what are you doing with his horse? He'd never lend that animal to any one, let alone a stranger."

"Well, I—I borrowed it, anyhow," said Johnnie. "I needed a horse bad, so I took the first one I set eyes on. I'll give him back to whoever owns him as soon as I get a chance."

The girl narrowed her eyes. Her attitude was distinctly hostile. "You've got the chance right now, stranger," she said sharply. "That horse belongs

here. If you know what's good for you, you'd better put him in the shed just as fast as you can. And then you'd better beat it out of here quick. This country isn't healthy for horse thieves."

"But say! Looka here!" Johnnie protested. "You've got me wrong. I ain't no horse thief. Gee! I never thought of stealing that animal. I just meant to borrer him so's I could make a get-away. Some fellas were after me hard, and there wasn't no time to hunt up the owner and explain. I'll hang round here till the owner comes, and apologize to him if that'll do any good. And if there's any way I can square things, why——"

His clumsy attempt to explain matters was broken off abruptly by a shrill laugh from the girl. "If Jed Thorsen finds you here you won't have any time to apologize." she declared, suddenly growing serious again. "If he knows you're the man who stole his horse, he'll put a bullet through you just as likely as not before you have a chance to open your mouth."

Hoboken Johnnie's round, boyish face looked startled and bewildered. "Gee!" he gasped out. "He'd shoot me just for borrerin' his horse? What kind of a guy is he, anyhow?"

For a moment the girl remained silent. She was studying the puzzling young man with deep interest. "Stranger, there's something funny about you," she said presently. "Who are you, and where did you come from? You don't look like you belonged out in this country at all. You look to me like a hobo from the railroad. And yet it don't seem as if there was anything bad about you."

"I guess I'm 'bout the same as a hobo," he admitted sadly. "N'York's my town. I been locked up in a freight car a coupla weeks. That's why I look like a bum. My name's Johnnie Henderson. I guess that don't mean nothing to you. I climbed into that car back in N'York to hide from a fella I didn't wanta meet, and they locked the door on me. Been living on canned stuff and salt fish in the freight. Guess I musta made an awful mess o' some o' them boxes. Thought they'd wanta arrest me when the door opened, so I made a quick get-away. They took after me when I lit out, so that's why I hadta borrer this horse. First time in my life I was ever more'n ten miles away from the big town."

"Well, Johnnie Henderson, you're more than two thousand miles away from it right now, and you're in bad," said the girl, with a troubled look in her brown eyes. "Maybe folks borrow one another's horses back in New York without taking the trouble to ask, but that don't go out in this country. Unless some peevish hombre takes a notion to shoot and save the county the expense of a trial, it means about ten years in prison. And, believe me, a horse thief out here don't get any sympathy from judge or jury. He gets the limit every time."

Hoboken Johnnie swallowed a lump in his throat and stared stupidly at the last colors of the sunset that were sinking behind the snow-tipped peaks. "Couldn't I square things with the guy that owns the horse?" he asked. "He'd believe me, wouldn't he, when I told him how it happened? He wouldn't wanta send a poor guy like me to prison, when he knew I didn't mean no harm."

The girl gave a hard, bitter laugh. "You don't know Jed Thorsen. He's got about as much heart as a wolf. A lot he'd care about your explanation. But he probably won't take the trouble to send you to prison. More likely, if he don't have to shoot to stop you from running, he'll beat you to a pulp with his fists just to show what a wonderful man he is. There's not a worse brute in the West than 'Bull' Thorsen."

For the first time Hoboken Johnnie grinned. He was no gun fighter, but he was not afraid of Bull Thorsen's fists or any other man's. "No," he declared with an emphatic shake of his head. "He won't beat me up. I ain't worrying 'bout that. But if he's liable to shoot, why that's something diffrunt. I don't know nothin' 'bout guns. So maybe I better put the horse in the shed and move on. I ain't the kind of a fella who looks for trouble ever. Enough of it comes to me without my huntin' it."

The girl stood looking after him thoughtfully as he moved away. She was still there in the doorway when he came out of the shed, where he had left the horse.

"Where are you going?" she demanded.

"I dunno," Johnnie answered dejectedly. "I guess I'll just start wanderin', that's all."

"Did anybody else see you take that horse?"

"Sure. Quite a number o' fellas musta seen me."

"Then that means you won't get very far before you're caught. They're probably scouring the country for miles around right now."

"I'm a hard-luck guy," Johnnie muttered hopelessly, with a shrug of his heavy shoulders. "I been bucking hard luck ever since I was a kid. Maybe here's where I meet my finish. It looks like it was comin' to me."

The girl's eyes filled with pity. "You'd have to walk six or eight miles before you came to another house, even if you didn't get caught before you got there," she told him. "And I don't want to have 'em catch you, stranger. Now you listen close to what I'm going to tell you. Look over there in those hills yonder. Do you see that big dead pine that's toppled over against the rock? Well, you head for that. When you get there you'll find a miner's old, tumble-down shack close by. It's nothing but a wreck, but it'll do to hide in. Nobody'll think of looking for you there. When they find the horse in the shed, I'll tell 'em you passed on south along the range. You'll find a spring back of the shack, and I'll bring you some grub as soon as I see a chance of getting away without being noticed."

Johnnie hesitated. "I hate to make all that trouble," he said dubiously. "Maybe I'll be getting you in bad with that fella, Jed Thorsen, if he finds out about it."

The girl frowned. "I'm in bad with him already. He——"

Abruptly the words broke off. She was staring off over the rolling range into the gathering darkness. A faint. far-away sound, the beating of horses' hoofs, came to their ears.

"Quick!" she cried. "There's no time to talk about it. They're coming."

Johnnie turned to the hills, and his big figure faded away into the dusk. He was safely out of sight but only two or three hundred feet away, when he heard horses clattering up to the house and the sound of men's excited voices. The fear of being sent to prison quickened his steps. After a few minutes the foothills rose abruptly in his way, and he began to climb up through the pines. Breathless he came before long to the little tumble-down shack the girl had described to him.

It was built of rough-hewn logs and looked as if it had stood there for many years. The door had fallen from its hinges and was lying on the ground. There was one small window with the glass still intact. Inside there was a broken chair and a mass of dried pine needles which had drifted in with the wind. They would make a fairly comfortable bed, he decided, for a man as tired as he was.

He could have dropped asleep at

once, but he wanted to remain awake until the girl came. His throat was burning with thirst, and he prowled about among the trees until he found the spring she had mentioned. It was as cold as ice and as clear as crystal —more delicious than rare old wine to a man who for two weeks or more had had nothing to drink but warm tomato juice. Refreshed, he returned to the shack and sat in the doorway. Through a gap in the pines he could look out over the far-spreading plain below. A full moon was slipping up on the horizon. Its light turned the dry ranges to silver and gold.

"Gee!" he muttered admiringly. "Some country! It suits me fine."

His spirits fell the next moment, for his memory stirred with painful reminders. In the deep darkness of a warehouse back in New York he could see the flash of a gun and a policeman staggering and falling in the doorway. And out here in this paradise men were hunting him as a thief. Hoboken Johnnie heaved a long sigh.

"A hard-luck guy!" he muttered. "That's me."

CHAPTER IV.

CAUGHT.

THE moon climbed high, but the girl did not come. As he sat in the doorway of the old shack, Johnnie's head nodded drowsily. He was not only sleepy but hungry. The exhilarating mountain air had helped to sharpen his appetite. Now and then he opened his eyes wide and stiffened up with a yawn. There was not a sound, not even the rustle of a tree, or the cracking of a twig, or the hollow murmur of a wind. The dead silence was strange and weird to him. The snow-tipped peaks, the dark foothills with their grim ramparts of bare rock, the vast, moon-gilded ranges which in the ethereal light bore a curious resemblance to a sea with long lines of white surf, were like painted scenery done by a master hand. There was no movement, no sign of life. It was like the world of a dream.

"From the distance that moon's climbed up, I'd say it must be close to midnight," he mused. "I guess she ain't comin'. Gee! I got appetite enough t'eat grass. I better turn in on the pine needles an' forget about it."

As he rose to his feet and stretched himself a slight sound came from down the steep slopes.

"Huh!" he grunted, after listening for a moment. "It didn't mean nothing, I guess. Some kind of animal maybe."

Presently the branch of a tree snapped, and a moment later a stone went clattering down into a gulch. The girl was surely coming, he told himself. Surely nobody else would be moving in that lonely place at such an hour of the night. Footsteps sounded on rock and gravel, and as with straining eyes he peered through the pines there was a flutter of white in the deep shadows. She was there.

"They're hunting you, stranger," she announced as she drew nearer. "Jed don't believe you meant to return that horse. He says you must have stopped at the house for a hand-out, not knowing the horse belonged there, and that you had to run away too quick to get it out of the shed when you heard him and the other men coming. He don't believe you even put it in the shed. Thinks the horse must have walked in there by himself."

Johnnie's hopes faded. "There—there ain't no danger of 'em finding out I'm up here?" he stammered.

The girl shook her head. "Not for a while, anyhow. I guess you're safe here for a day or so."

Then he noticed that she was carrying a bundle under her arm. It was a surprising large bundle to contain

only a meal. But he was far more interested in the girl, herself, so much so in fact that he forgot all about his hunger. With the moonlight on her face she was bewitching, and his heart seemed to stand still for a moment. He sighed hopelessly.

"I'm nothing but a bum to her," he reminded himself. "Can't understand why she's took all this trouble t'help me. Most goils woulda told me t'go chase myself."

Perhaps she read his thoughts, for as he stepped forward to meet her and she placed the bundle in his hands her face hardened for an instant as she exclaimed, "I'd save even a dog from Jed Thorsen if I could. You may be no better than any other railroad hobo, but I'm going to give you a chance. You're going to lay low here till to-morrow night, when the hunt's died down. Then you're going to make tracks out of here fast if you know what's good for you."

With a helpless look Johnnie surveyed the landscape. Two thousand miles from the big town, with only half a dollar in his pocket. He had not even a hat. The prospect was not encouraging.

"This country don't seem t'like me a little bit," he observed. "I no more'n land here, feeling peaceable and friendly, than I gotta beat it out. And I seen a pome once that said out West, the handclasps was a little warmer." With a frown he glanced at the bundle. "Well, say! It looks like you brought along enough food t'last a week."

"It isn't all food in there," the girl explained. "There's a hat, and a shirt, and a pair of overalls and a shaving outfit. I knew you'd have to change your looks some to have any kind of a chance of getting away. They'll be looking for a hobo with whiskers, and no hat, and a shirt and collar that look as if they hadn't been washed for a year."

Johnnie stared at her in surprise. "You're doin' a lot fer a poor bum like me," he muttered. "How come you got hold of these things? Some guy's goin' to miss 'em bad, ain't he?"

"You don't have to worry about that," she answered with a dry smile. "The man they belong to is never coming back, I guess. Worked for Jed for a while, but he had to get out in a hurry when he heard he'd been trailed here from down Texas, where he'd broke jail. These things have been lying round the house ever since, and nobody's going to miss 'em."

Johnnie sat down in the doorway of the shack and opened the bundle. A wide grin spread over his face as he discovered the food it contained. "Gee! Ham sandwiches! Apple pie! They sure make my mouth water after livin' a coupla weeks on salt fish an' beans."

"It isn't much of a spread," said the girl apologetically. "But I didn't dare fuss around any more than I had to. I'd waited till the men had turned in for the night, but I was afraid one of them would wake up and get suspicious if he heard me."

"S'pose these things don't fit?" suggested Johnnie dubiously as he pulled out a pair of blue overalls, a red flannel shirt and a battered sombrero, inspecting them critically. He tried on the hat and found it was a trifle too big. A tightening of the strap that was around its crown quickly remedied that difficulty.

"He was a great big hombre that wore 'em—as big as you," she replied. "They'll come near enough to fitting, I guess. Even if they don't you couldn't look worse than you do now."

Pursing her lips and puckering her forehead, she studied him suspiciously. "That story you told about being locked up in a freight car isn't so easy to believe," she decided. "Like as not you're no better than the rest of the tramps

that drop off from the railroad every once in a while."

The words hurt, and he glared at her reproachfully. It was pretty hard to have to appear so disreputable, and he showed a sudden interest in the shaving things she had brought to him. She hadn't forgotten anything. They were all there, even the necessary mirror, though it wasn't more than half as big at his hand. The moon was bright enough to reveal his reflection in the glass clearly. For a moment he stared at his bearded face with scowling disapproval.

"Gee! I guess you gotta right to think I'm a bum!" he exclaimed. Putting down the sandwich he had been munching, he picked up the razor. "Hold on about five minutes. I don't wanta be lookin' like this while you're around."

He took a tin cup that had come in the bundle, got some water from the spring, propped the mirror up on a rusty hinge in the doorway where the moon shone on it, and set to work on his face with the razor. After shaving he disappeared for a few moments into the darkness of the shack. When he came out he was wearing the clean shirt and the blue overalls. Hoboken Johnnie was well worth looking at now, and he seemed to realize it. There was a self-satisfied smile on his boyish face. The girl smiled, too.

"You certainly don't look like a hobo now," she exclaimed, surveying him with frank approval. "Why, I didn't have any idea you could look so nice. I'm beginning to believe your story. I'll bet you came from respectable folks, anyhow."

"I got no folks at all now," he explained with a mournful shake of his head. "But they was respectable all right. If you'd ever seen my mother—well, say! I got the proof right here. Just you take a look at her pi'ture, and then maybe you'll b'lieve me."

Carefully he pulled out the photograph he had saved in his flight from the rooming house, and held it out to her. "I guess you gotta have more light to see it well," he observed, fumbling in his pockets for a match. "It ain't no way to be carrying my mother's photo. Liable t'damage it. But—well, it'd take too long to explain now."

When the match flared the girl studied the picture. seeing a face so sweet and kindly and lovable that it won her at once. It proved to be Hoboken Johnnie's passport to her confidence.

"I haven't any folks, either," she said presently. "My mother died only a year ago."

Johnnie turned to her with a stare of inquiry. "Then who's the boss o' this place where you're livin'? That fella, Jed Thorsen?"

The girl nodded. "I guess so. He thinks he is, anyhow. But they're two other men sharing the ranch with him, his brother, Harvey, and Steve Garner."

"How d'you fit in here?" Johnnie demanded bluntly. "You workin' for 'em?"

"My mother owned the ranch. It was never worth much, and she couldn't squeeze a living out of it with just a few head of cattle. When she died her money was all gone. There was a mortgage on the place for about all of its value, and the Thorsens and Garner got hold of it. I just stayed on and kept house for 'em. Didn't have any other place to go. They said they'd pay me wages, but I haven't seen any of their money yet. Now Jed says that instead of paying me, he'll marry me, but I told him he'd better think again. I've found out too much about him to want him for a husband."

For a moment Johnnie pondered this information in troubled silence. "And these guys are making a go of it?" he asked.

"How can they? There's nothing on

the place except the few cattle and horses my mother had. There might be a small living here for one man, if he worked hard. Not for three."

"Then what's the idea?" he persisted. "What're they doing here if there's no living in it for 'em?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know. I guess I've said enough anyhow."

Slowly she turned away. "It's time I was getting back. And I may not find a chance to get up here again. If I don't, you've got enough food to keep you from starving for a while. You lie low here all through to-morrow, and when it comes dark you make tracks south. There's another railroad station fifteen miles below here. You stay there till you can hop a train. Maybe the sheriff's sent out word about you already, but you're pretty well disguised with your clean shave, and a hat, and those clothes."

Johnnie's round face clouded. "Well, say!" he exclaimed. "I don't feel like beatin' it outa here without seein' you no more. Ain't we going t'meet again, nohow?"

"It don't look much that way," she answered, "unless you want to run a swell chance of getting found out by Jed. He had to come back from town on a borrowed horse, and he's pretty well riled. Says he's going to start out in the morning to help the sheriff look for you."

"What's your name?" Johnnie demanded. "I'd kinda like to know because I'll be figgerin' on findin' yuh again some time."

"My name's Amy Dollard. But you'd better not come back—ever."

She had moved a few feet away into the pines, when she stopped abruptly with a startled catch of her breath. Close ahead of her a man had come out of the black shadows.

"Jed!" she gasped out.

The man grinned. Without a word to her, he stepped softly out into the moonlight in front of the shack. He was tall and slender and well built. Women would have called him handsome. The girl's description of him didn't seem to fit. He didn't look the brute she had called him—not at this moment at least. He stopped and stood staring, with cold, unwavering eyes at Hoboken Johnnie. His square chin was poked out truculently, and he was still grinning. For a few moments there was a dead silence. Now and then he turned the corner of an eye at the girl. who was watching him in much the same way that a quivering bird, helpless with fright, waits for a snake to strike.

Apparently his unexpected intrusion had brought a sudden paralysis of terror not only to the girl but to the stranger he had discovered with her. Jed Thorsen seemed to be enjoying the situation thoroughly. With slow deliberation he lit a cigarette. As he tossed the smoldering match away his grin broke into a soft laugh.

"I been standin' by fer quite a spell listenin' in on yuhr little confab," he admitted as he stepped up to Johnnie. "I reckon yuh ain't packin' a gun, but I better make sure."

He ran his hand over the pockets of the blue overalls so swiftly that Johnnie scarcely had time to pull his wits together and failed to notice for a moment that the photograph had been deftly abstracted from the pocket of the red shirt. With the picture in his fingers Jed Thorsen drew back a step or two and paused to look at it.

"So this is mother," he observed with a leer. "I heard 'bout mother while I was standin' by over yonder."

With a bellow of rage Hoboken Johnnie sprang at him; the next instant he found the muzzle of a revolver poking into his face.

"Why, yuh darned hoss thief!" Thorsen said, snarling. "Yuh try any-

thin' like that on me an' I'll plug yuh so full o' holes yuh'll look like a Swiss cheese."

"You give that pi'ture back!" yelled Johnnie, his eyes blazing. "You hand it over, or I'll—I'll——" He looked at the pointing gun and realized his helplessness.

Thorsen was no longer grinning. His mouth was a hard, thin-lipped line, with the corners curled into a sneer. "Jest stand back thar an' keep quiet," he ordered, with a menacing shift of the gun. "I ain't any too fond o' yuh, and if this thing happens t'go off there won't be no regrets from me. Yuh been actin' up purty big fer a poor, sneakin' bum that's been beatin' his way on the railroad. Stole my hoss an' then tried t'make a hit with my gal; an' I reckon it's 'bout time I learned yuh a lesson."

Once more he looked at the photograph as he held it up against his gun. Suddenly, with a quick twist of the wrist, he tore it in half, and tossed the pieces at Johnnie's feet.

"Easy, now, brother!" he warned, raising the muzzle of the gun with a jerk, for Johnnie was coming for him again. "Don't git excited, or this thing'll go off. An' lemme tell yuh somethin' more. I allus hit what I aim at, an' if yuh gimme any o' yuhr lip I'll maim yuh so's no woman'll ever take any notice of yuh ag'in. I'll shoot an ear off, an' I'll crease a bullet along yuhr face, an' I'll make yuh so ugly yuh'll never have no more yearnin' fer mirrors."

Amy Dollard was coming out of her trance, and her temper was rising a little higher with every moment. "Some time somebody'll shoot lead into you, Jed Thorsen," she cried, "and it'll be good riddance."

Thorsen's grin returned. "So yuh've found yuhr voice at last, eh, sister? Too bad I hadta spoil yuhr little plan fer helpin' this bum on his way, but I'm a light sleeper. When I heard yuh sneakin' out in the middle of the night, I tells myself I better find out what's doin'. I gotta admit I had a surprise comin' t'me, fer I allus thought yuh wus too proud o' yuhrself to be takin' up with an ornery hobo."

"No matter what he is," she retorted, "I'll bet he's a better man than you are. He brought your horse back anyhow, so he's not a thief."

"So he made yuh b'lieve that, eh, sister?" he returned with a sneer. "He fooled yuh. He didn't know where that hoss b'longed, an' he was goin' t'ride on ag'in, arter he'd begged somethin' t'eat. I reckon he musta heard us comin' and hadta make his get-away so fast he didn't have time t'git the hoss outa the shed. He's a thief all right, an' I kin send him up fer a good long term if I've got a mind to."

He turned to Johnnie, who had picked up the pieces of the photograph and was staring at them in dumb misery.

"Now yuh march, stranger. And yuh, too, sister. We're goin' back t' the house."

CHAPTER V.

THE MAN THEY NEEDED.

THE little, one-story house stood dark and silent when Amy Dollard, at Jed's orders, returned to it alone. As she stepped into its narrow hallway, she felt sure that Harvey Thorsen and Steve Garner were still sleeping, unaware of their partner's absence. Softly she passed on to her room, where the moonlight was shining in at the bare window. The window faced the west, looking out on the mountains. Often on such nights as this, the snow-tipped, glittering peaks had held her spellbound; they had no charm for her now. She was not even looking at them. Instead her attention was directed to a near-by slope, where a ramshackle group of small outbuildings,

and just beyond them, a horse corral, were clearly visible.

After a few moments the indistinct figure of a man emerged from the shadows and moved toward the house. She knew it was Jed. She believed she knew what he had done with Johnnie Henderson. There was only one place over there that would serve as a sure prison, the little, windowless building behind the horse shed. Though it had been empty for a long time, it had once been used as a tool house, and it had a strong door with a padlock fastening.

The girl's face hardened as Jed came into sight, and there was an angry fire in her eyes. For weeks her fear of this man had been growing, but now it was mixed with bitter hatred and a rapidly rising spirit of revolt. Little by little she had learned a good deal about him and his brother and Garner. Living under the same roof with them she could scarcely have avoided overhearing many scraps of conversation that had not been intended for her ears. She knew now that years ago they had all been cattle rustlers and she had reason for suspecting that since they had been mixed up in other shady undertakings, through which they had acquired the money they had put into the ranch. If she had had any money she would have tried to get away long before this. To be sure, three of the horses on the place had not been included in the foreclosure sale and were her own property, but she was quite sure Jed would not allow her to take them away. He was a man of forceful and masterful personality. The spell of it had held her in a paralysis of dread.

Yet Amy Dollard was not without spirit and courage, and she had now made up her mind it was high time to assert her independence, to break loose from the hold these men had been gaining over her. The situation had become unendurable. To-night Jed's treatment of Johnnie Henderson had roused her to fury. There was something about Johnnie that stirred her sympathies deeply, and the thought that he was going to be sent to prison, merely to satisfy the spite of a rascal like Thorsen, rankled.

She believed that if she could get out to the old tool house without being discovered by Jed, she could find some means of wrenching off the lock that held the door. It was an outside lock, fastened to the door and the jamb by heavy bolts. The bolts might hold firm against all her efforts, but she could break the padlock with a hammer. However, that would be a noisy proceeding, and Jed, as he sometimes remarked, slept with his ears open.

Footsteps sounded from the hall, and softly she tiptoed to her door to listen. If Jed went to his room she would wait, she told herself, until he was asleep and then steal over to the tool house and make an effort to break the lock. Out in the sheds there were hammers and other kinds of implements.

But Jed did not go to his room. Instead he went to the room which, owing to the limited accommodations of the little house, Harvey Thorsen and Steve Garner were compelled to occupy together. He was going to break the news to them, of course, of the capture of the man who had taken his horse.

Amy heard him enter the room and close the door behind him. Her curiosity was aroused at once, for she was somewhat doubtful as to just what Jed's plans were concerning his prisoner. Just when and by whom Johnnie was going to be surrendered to the law, might be worth finding out. Quickly, she slipped off her shoes and with steps as noiseless as a cat's stole to the door of the room that held the three men. For a moment she thought of passing on out of the house to try her luck with the lock that secured

Johnnie's prison, but she soon realized that this was not the right time for such an attempt. The men might see her from their window, which commanded as full a view of the outbuildings as her own; and if they didn't see her they would very likely hear her.

Jed had waked the two men and was telling the news. It was not a pleasant version for Amy's ears of what had happened that night at the old shack in the hills, for it was interspersed with brutal threats and boasting and foul oaths. Yet the girl did not stir from the door. There was danger that it would be pulled open from the inside at any moment, but she had a plausible explanation ready at the tip of her tongue in case she should be discovered. She would say she was on her way to the kitchen to get something she had forgotten. Perhaps they would doubt her but it wouldn't matter much if they did. It was more likely that Jed, at least, would be indifferent, for he seemed to believe she was too much in dread of him to be dangerous. At any rate, he was not taking the trouble now to speak in a lower tone than usual. Once, when one of the men cautioned him not to make so much noise, he burst into a contemptuous laugh.

"Don't worry 'bout little Amy," he said. "She knows on what side her bread is buttered, and she's goin' to play safe. I'll have that kid eatin' outa my hand 'fore long. You watch me."

Amy's opinion of Jed, which had been low enough before, promptly dropped to zero. She continued to listen; presently she was rewarded for her trouble.

"The bum has come our way at jest the right time," she heard Jed say. "That was a straight tip we got about Luke Benner. Ter-morrer night he drives up ter Silver Gap with the mazumas ter pay the gang that's buildin' the dam there. Eighteen thousand bucks he's goin' t'carry, and the dern ole fool thinks nobody'll know 'bout it 'cause he ain't goin' ter start till arter folks are abed."

"He's gotta run it up at night, anyhow," said a voice that Amy recognized as Steve Garner's, " 'cause the train that's bringin' the money ter the bank in town don't git in till seven p. m. And the money's gotta be up at the Gap in the mornin'."

"Jest the same, he ain't startin' till eleven p. m.," Jed resumed. "And the reason he's waitin' four hours longer than he hasta is 'cause he don't wanta take no chances o' bein' held up."

"We ain't goin' ter hold him up, anyhow," Garner put in. "It wouldn't be safe, doin' a job like that so close ter home. Two long, thin hombres and a short, fat one, ridin' hosses that Luke's seen many a time—oh, no! Not fer me. We stand in strong with the sheriff, but we can't afford ter take no chance like that. There's some rumors round these parts already that our pasts won't stand investigatin'."

"Shut yuhr fool mouth, Steve, an' lemme explain," muttered Jed. "We ain't goin' ter hold him up—no. The bum I got locked up out in the tool house is goin' ter do that part o' the job fer us."

There was a moment of silence. Then Steve laughed. "Will he do it?" he asked presently.

"Would yuh do it if yuh knew yuh wus goin' ter be sent t'prison fer a few years, if yuh wouldn't?" Jed asked, with a sneer. "All we gotta do is t'stand by off in the trees somewheres, outa sight an' hearin' from Luke, and then the bum sticks a gun in his face an' gets the stuff. The bum gits a present of five hundred bucks fer helpin' us."

"Huh?" It was Harvey Thorsen's shrill voice this time, raised in indignant protest. "Yuh gone loco, Jed? All that bum oughta git is a swift kick in the pants."

"And mebbe that's somethin' like what he will git," Jed agreed. "But he gits a promise of five hundred bucks besides. It don't cost us nothin' ter promise, and it'll make him a lot more keerful 'bout doin' the job just right."

Before long Amy turned away and tiptoed back to her room. There with her candle unlighted, she sat deep in thought till the moonlight died out and the first gray streaks of dawn broke over the ranges. She heard Jed walking heavily through the hall to his room. He might be awake for another half hour, by that time it would be daylight. To her tired mind, the plan of trying to break the lock of the tool house seemed hopeless now. Wearily, she undressed and crept into bed to get a little sleep before it would be time to get breakfast ready.

Out in the tool house, Hoboken Johnnie had also been doing some hard thinking. He had made up his mind that, when morning came, he would be turned over to the sheriff. In that case, judging from what Amy Dollard had told him, his chance of escaping conviction and a long prison term would be slim, indeed. In the dense darkness he groped about in the hope of finding some sort of an implement with which he might pry out one of the rough boards of the walls, but his reaching hands encountered nothing at all that would serve him. He had learned since leaving New York that his mind could be resourceful in emergencies as desperate as this.

"When that guy comes to open the door," he told himself presently, "I'll jump him 'fore he has time t'pull the gun. If I can get my hands on that cuss I'll sure maul him good and plenty."

It was consoling through the dragging hours in the black prison to think of what he might be able to do to Jed Thorsen. If he could get hold of Jed's gun, he'd have a fighting chance anyway.

As soon as the first little glimmer of daylight came through the chinks in the boards, Johnnie became alert. His ears were watching for footsteps. The instant the door opened Jed would think a whole family of mad wild cats had dumped on him. The hard-luck guy from New York was ready to give that grinning gun toter the biggest lesson of his life.

At last footsteps did come—footsteps and voices. Jed was not coming alone. After a moment it became evident from the conversation outside the door that all three of the men were there. Johnnie's courage sank. He had been ready to take a desperate chance, but to try a surprise attack now would be more like plain suicide.

Presently the door was pulled open, and Jed, again with the leering, maddening grin on his face, peered in at his prisoner. At the same time there came pressing into the doorway a lanky, red-haired man with round shoulders and a long scrawny neck. and a short, fat man with no neck at all. Apparently the red-haired man was Harvey Thorsen, for his face bore a strong resemblance to Jed's. His fat companion was probably Steve Garner.

"We got a little propersition to offer," Jed began, as he lit a cigarette. "We've made up our minds t'give yuh a fair chance t'make a git-away. Me an' Harve an' Steve here hev all got soft, kind hearts, and we can't bear ter think of yuh spendin' all the best years of yuhr life in a dark cell. It don't seem right."

"And we've thought out a way of gittin' money enough fer yuh so yuh kin git back East where yuh come from," said the red-haired man affably.

"Jed is right," the fat man put in sympathetically, as he turned his puffy face and bulging eyes to Johnnie. "There ain't nothin' mean erbout us.

Y'could travel a thousand miles without findin' three more kind-hearted fellas than us. We want yuh t' go back home in style, with a bunch o' mazumas in yuhr clo'es."

For a moment Hoboken Johnnie studied the faces of his three visitors with grave doubts of their kind intentions. "All right," he muttered with a scowl. "Go ahead and spill what you got on your minds. I'm listenin'."

"We got a little job fer yuh, stranger," said Jed. "Yuh kin take it or leave it. Yuh kin take yuhr choice between makin' a nice little clean-up and bein' sent up fer hoss stealin'. It's our dooty ter turn yuh over ter the law. an' we oughta do it, but it looks now like yuh're jest the fella we need. We gotta hev somebody that ain't known round here, an' yuh happened 'long at jest the right time."

"Jest like as if Proverdunce had sent yuh to us," put in the fat man.

Then Johnnie heard the story of Luke Benner and the pay money for the gang at the Silver Gap dam.

"So how erbout it?" Jed demanded at last after carefully explaining the part their prisoner was expected to play. "Will yuh do it?"

"You three crooks can go and jump on yourselves!" muttered Johnnie wrathfully.

A steely glint came into Jed's eyes. "Yuh dern fool!" he said. "Can't yuh see we're offerin' yuh the on'y chance yuh're goin' ter git?"

Johnnie stood grimly silent. He had fallen for a crooked game once and had sworn off for good.

"Jed, it's my notion that we better take this hombre up inter the hills an' pump some lead inter him," Harvey Thorsen suggested. "It's the easiest way of gittin' rid of him an' the safest. It'll keep him from shootin' his fool mouth off. Nobody'd b'lieve him, but all the same we don't want him spreadin' stories 'bout us."

It seemed to be a pleasing idea to Jed. "All right," he agreed after a moment's reflection. "We'll croak this bird out in a spot where he'll never be found in a thousand years. Come on, an' we'll git the hosses right now."

Johnnie was thinking fast. Jed had offered him five hundred dollars and his liberty. Life might still be worth living. He wanted to go straight, but he was no saint ready to be shot for his principles and to be left in the hills for the wolves to pick. It occurred to him that there was one particularly pressing reason for remaining alive—to square accounts some time with Jed Thorsen. These men might be bluffing. He wasnt' sure. But he wasn't ready to stake his life on that possibility, with being sent to prison as the only alternative.

"Never mind about the horses, you dirty dogs!" he cried. "I'll hold up that pay wagon."

CHAPTER VI.

EASY MONEY.

WITH a happy smile on his puffy face, Steve Garner waddled into the kitchen, looking for Pansy, his cat. He was as fond of Pansy as he was of his horse, and many of his moments of relaxation he devoted to her. She was a pampered creature, fat, amiable and lazy, like her master. Her peculiar color of white and tortoise shell resembled the markings often found on the flower of which she had been named. He found Pansy under the stove. Getting down on his hands and knees, he dragged her out, and, selecting the only comfortable chair in the room, sat down with his arms around her, while his plump hands stroked her into a purring song of contentment.

Breakfast was over for Steve and the two Thorsens, and Amy was washing the dishes. She was looking tired and worried; there were dark rings

under her eyes. The window over the sink where she was at work gave a view of the corral, where half a dozen horses were milling about getting their morning exercise, and of the sheds, but the tool house was out of sight. It was there that Jed still lingered, but his brother Harvey had ridden off a few minutes ago leading the horse Jed had been compelled to borrow in town the night before and which was now being returned to its owner.

"Yuh didn't fergit ter give Pansy her breakfast?" inquired Steve, turning his popeyes to the girl anxiously.

"I'll give her rat poison if she don't stop getting under my feet," Amy exclaimed crossly as she watched from the window for Jed to appear. "I don't suppose it makes any difference to you whether that man you've got locked up out there gets any breakfast."

"Him?" said Steve, glaring at her reproachfully. "That ain't my affair. That's up ter Jed. Mebbe he wants the cuss fed an' mebbe not. Sometimes starvin' hoss thieves is good for 'em. Takes the meanness out of 'em."

Spying a pitcher of milk on the table, he proceeded to pour some of it into a saucer for Pansy, who scorned it.

"Jed's going to give him up to the sheriff?" Amy asked presently.

For a moment Steve pondered this question while he fondled the cat. "No, I b'lieve Jed's made up his mind ter turn him loose. He's jest had a heart-to-heart talk with the hombre and finds he ain't so bad arter all and that we may hev mistook his intentions erbout that hoss. Jed feels sorry fer the cuss now. There ain't nothin' mean erbout Jed. He allus wants t'do the square thing and ter treat folks like he'd want 'em ter treat him."

Amy relapsed into stony silence. She had found out what she had wanted to know and was sure now that Johnnie Henderson had been bullied into consenting to rob Benner of the pay money. Her face grew more serious. She frowned over the dishes as she studied the problem the situation presented to her. She was quite sure Jed's victim was not going to get a dollar of the money he might steal and that he would be left to wander away on foot with empty pockets, with a chance of being caught and later identified by Benner as the bandit.

In that case, if Johnnie should reveal the part played by the two Thorsens and Steve in the robbery, his story wouldn't count for much with the sheriff, with whom Jed had managed to form a strong friendship. If she could get Winnie, her quick-footed mare, out of the corral unobserved she could ride to Benner's place and warn him, but it was scarcely possible she would find such an opportunity. Then it occurred to her that if she should warn Benner he would be prepared for the hold-up—probably with an armed companion with him—and Johnnie would either be shot or arrested. Things were looking pretty hopeless.

Then she discovered Jed and his prisoner coming up from the sheds. They came into the kitchen, where Johnnie, silent and dejected, seated himself at the table.

"Give him the best yuh got, Amy," said Jed. "I wouldn't want even a dog t'go hungry round here."

Amy was given no chance of exchanging a word or even a look with the prisoner that failed to escape Jed's notice. As soon as the meal was over Johnnie was taken back to the tool house and locked up again. Jed was taking no risks. It was the same at dinner and supper. Jed was constantly on watch while Johnnie was in the kitchen.

Not long after supper Amy discovered Jed examining a rifle. For a few moments there seemed to be a problem on his mind. Then, as if with sudden decision, he emptied the magazine of its cartridges. Evidently Johnnie was not

going to be trusted with a loaded weapon in holding up Luke Benner.

Two hours of darkness passed while Jed, Steve and Harvey, who had returned shortly after dinner from town, lounged about the house. Apparently they were not worrying about what the night might bring forth. They were not men who were troubled with nerves. For the third or fourth time that day Steve fished Pansy out from under the stove and held her in his arms while he smoked his pipe. He looked thoroughly happy and contented, as a man should look who expects to get his hands on a one-third share of eighteen thousand dollars before morning.

At last, all three of the men went down to the sheds, Jed carrying the rifle from which he had extracted the cartridges. It was another moonlit night. Amy, standing at the window of her bedroom, saw four horses being brought out. Then Johnnie Henderson appeared. She remained watching the four riders, as they moved away toward the foothills. They were heading for the road to Silver Gap. The figures faded away into the shadows of the ranges; and Amy, turning quickly away from the window, ran through the house and out into the night.

In deep dejection Hoboken Johnnie rode on through the moonlight with his three companions. He was hopeless and desperate. If he had seen a ghost of a chance of making his escape, he would have been ready to take it, even at the risk of being brought down by a bullet, but the two Thorsens were riding close on either side of him, while Steve brought up the rear. Johnnie would have to stick to his bargain. He could see no possibility of evading it.

The thought of holding up Luke Benner at the point of a gun made his blood run cold. What was he going to do, he asked himself again and again, in case Benner should prove stubborn? Would he shoot the driver and make himself a murderer? He didn't know that the rifle which Jed was presently going to place in his hands was unloaded. It occurred to him, too, that Benner might be prepared to do some shooting himself. Johnny could find no comfort in the prospect at all.

As they passed into the foothills, the road grew darker. They moved into the black shadows of tall pines and cedars. The air grew heavy with the odors of the forests. Now and then a shaft of moonlight fell across their way. Sometimes a patch of snow on some bleak slope glistened far above them.

"Now listen, stranger," said Jed after a long silence. "This job is goin' ter be so simple that there ain't no need t'worry erbout it. Benner ain't goin' ter give no trouble—not while yuh've got the drop on him. But yuh wanta be dern sure yuh keep the drop on him till yuh've frisked him of his gun. I've chose the best place in the world fer pullin' off a trick like this—the top o' the pass jest this side o' the Gap. The road runs narrer there between two rocks. Just barely room fer the wagon t'squeeze through. And t'other side o' the rocks the road dips down sudden and steep inter a sharp turn. Benner'll be hevin' all he can do guidin' his hosses and holdin' 'em from slippin'. Right thar by the turn on that slope is where yuh git the drop on him."

The road climbed higher into the hills. Sometimes they came to open places where only dwarf pines clung to the hillsides. Sometimes they skirted a deep, narrow valley, which lay below them like a black pool. Sometimes came the sound of a stream, roaring and hissing over its steep, rough bed of rocks. And often there was only the soft cooing of turtle doves to break the dead silence. At last there rose before them two grim walls of rock through which the road barely squeezed its way. It was the top of the pass, and ahead, far below them, lamplight glowed in a win-

dow of a cabin at the dam. Men were waiting there for the delivery of the pay money from the bank.

"Now, brother, this is where yuh pull the trick," Jed announced, as he handed the rifle to Johnnie. "We'll look arter yuhr hoss. Yuh ain't goin' ter need him till the job's done. Git down thar ter that turn and hide yuhrself. Yuh can't mistake Benner and his team. He's an old guy with gray whiskers, and his horses are bays with white faces."

If there had been a wood close by—one of those dense growths of pine through which they had been passing—Johnnie would have seen some slight chance of escape; but here the situation looked hopeless. Up on the high hillside above the road where his companions were now climbing with their horses they would be able to conceal themselves behind the rocks from Benner's observation, but he himself would be constantly within their view. All around him the hillsides were barren. He would have to travel at least half a mile to find woods, and before he had gone a quarter of that distance he would be overtaken. So, resigning himself to whatever fate might have in store for him, he swung out of his saddle, passed down the steep incline of the road and stationed himself against the wall of rock at the turn.

For a few moments he could see the three men climbing up the hillside with their horses and the one he had been riding. Presently men and animals suddenly disappeared. Yet he knew that from some hollow or from behind some rock he was being watched steadily.

Time dragged on. He saw the moon slipping down behind the crest of the hills. Before long the stars began to go out. The sky was growing black. He smelled rain in the air, and after a time he heard faintly from the distance the soft rush of a swift mountain storm.

An hour must have passed, he believed, perhaps longer, while he listened for the rattle of wheels on the road. The only sound was the distant rush of the storm. A long fork of lightning tore through the blackening sky, and presently a few drops of rain pattered heavily in the dry dust of the road. Then his heart jumped. For suddenly there had come the sound for which he had been waiting—wheels. He braced himself against the wall of rock. He could feel his knees sagging, and every nerve in his body was quivering.

The rattle of the wheels was steadily coming nearer. Now they were just beyond the top of the pass. Suddenly the white faces of two bay horses appeared in the narrow way between the rocks. Their driver was leaning far forward in the seat with both hands outstretched on the reins as the horses were guided slowly and cautiously down the steep grade. In the dark, the driver was an indistinct figure, and Johnnie's eyes were on the team.

With a courage born of desperation, Hoboken Johnnie sprang forward, as the team came to the turn. "Throw 'em up!" he yelled with the rifle raised to his shoulder.

Then the lightning flashed again and revealed the white face of the driver. It was not Luke Benner's face, nor any other man's. It was Amy Dollard's.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FUGITIVES.

FOR a moment amazement held Hoboken Johnnie paralyzed. His rifle dropped to his side, and he stood staring at Amy Dollard in speechless stupefaction. She had not obeyed his command to throw up her hands, but she had brought the team to an abrupt stop.

"Quick now, Johnnie Henderson!" she cried. "They'll be after us in a minute, and you've got no time to waste staring at me."

The sound of her voice brought him

out of his trance, and he made a spring for the seat. As he came plopping heavily down beside her, she was already guiding the team around the dangerous turn.

Up on the hillside a pistol cracked. The horses, stung by the whistling lash of their driver's whip, sprang forward. They broke into a wild run. Behind them the wagon came bumping and swaying down the steep, uneven road. Once more there came the sound of a gun.

Until he heard the guns Johnnie, thoroughly bewildered by the swift turn of events, had been struggling to pull his wits together and to discover whether he was awake or dreaming. He had been about to ask the girl what it all meant. A vague idea had come to him that this team, though it answered the description given by Jed, could not be Benner's and that the old man and the pay wagon must still be on their way toward the top of the pass. The shots roused him to quick decision. It was not a time for questions. The girl's life and his own were in danger.

His fingers tightened on the rifle. For a moment he felt that he could not nerve himself to bring it into action. Though he knew something about guns and had often tested his marksmanship in shooting galleries, he had never in his life shot at a human being. The conviction that he must do so now set him quivering.

Looking back he could see dark figures clambering down the hillside dragging their horses behind them. One of these figures paused and raised an arm. Another shot rang out, and a bullet struck sharply somewhere on the wagon. Sudden desperation stiffened Johnnie's nerves. He raised the rifle and pulled the trigger; but there was no report. He tried the trigger again and again, but the gun remained silent.

"Empty!" he roared. "Those sneaking crooks gave me an empty gun!"

Just then the rifle almost slipped out of his hands as the wagon, hitting a rock, leaped into the air and came down with a terrific bump.

"I thought—we—were goners then—sure," Amy gasped out breathlessly as, crouching forward on the rolling seat, she held a firm grip on the reins over the galloping horses. "But—we're all right yet."

Her whips swished through the air, and the animals plunged on a little faster. "How far—behind us are they, Johnnie? We've got another half mile before we get to the dam."

"They've got down to the road," said Johnnie. "They've climbed their horses and they're gainin' on us with every jump from the way it looks."

"Put your hand into my pocket, Johnnie," she cried. "I've got the cartridges for that gun—there."

The next moment he found the cartridges in her coat and slipped them into the rifle. He could hear a horse tearing along close behind them in the dark, and he recognized it presently as Harvey Thorsen's. It was overtaking them steadily. Johnnie raised the gun to his shoulder. For ten or fifteen more seconds, he watched Harvey's mount closing up the gap between them. Then he took careful aim at the horse and fired. With a snort of pain the animal staggered and fell headlong. Its rider, thrown violently into the air, came down sprawling on the road, slid along through the dust for a few feet and then lay still. Jed and Steve, following close behind him, pulled up their horses. Then the wagon swept round a turn in the road, and the scene of the disaster vanished. The sounds of the pursuit had stopped, and close ahead of them now stood the lighted cabin at the dam.

"Pull 'em up!" shouted Johnnie. "There's nobody followin' us, and those horses are runnin' their legs off." As the speed of their team slackened he added, "That shot of mine brought down

Harve Thorsen's horse, and Harve's lyin' in the road senseless. That oughta mean the other two have had enough. Too bad I didn't get Jed."

Amy made no comment. Her eyes never left the team for an instant, for the dark, rough road was still dangerous. After a few more moments she pulled them up before the doorway of the cabin. Almost immediately a man came out from the building with a lantern under his arm. The sight of the hard-blown horses, steaming and covered with lather, startled him.

"What you been trying to do to those horses, Luke?" he demanded. "They look all in." And then as he glanced at the two indistinct figures on the wagon seat he realized that Luke was not there. "Why, where's Benner?" he exclaimed.

"He couldn't come," said Amy, as she reached under the seat and began to drag out fat canvas bags which Johnnie knew must be full of paper money and coin. "Here's your money."

"He couldn't come?" the man persisted. "What the matter with him? Sick?"

"I think he's had a nerve shock," Amy answered. "But you needn't worry about him. It's nothing serious. Do we get a receipt for this money?"

"Sure thing." The man was piling the bags up on his arms. "Wait till this stuff's been looked over." As he passed into the cabin he called back, "You better not let Luke find out the way you've been using his horses."

A long time passed before he appeared again. The rain which had begun while they were at the top of the pass grew a little heavier and there was no cover to the wagon. The water was beginning to soak through their clothing, but they scarcely noticed it. There was too much else to think about just then. But it was a poor place and a poor time to divulge secrets, and they both remained silent until the man came out with the receipt for the money. As he stood with the lantern under his arm and passed the paper to Amy the rain splashed against his face. He glanced off into the hills, which were being illumined every few moments by brilliant flashes of lightning.

"That storm is raising the devil somewheres between here and town," he observed. "You're liable to get into the worst of it if you go back to-night. You better stay here."

"We can't do it," said Amy with firm decision. "We've got to get back to-night."

"It'll be after daylight when you get back," the man argued. But Amy had already picked up the reins, and the team was starting. "If I were you," he called after them, "I wouldn't drive those horses quite so hard on the way back."

As soon as he had disappeared once more into the cabin, Amy stopped the team. Her eyes were full of perplexity. She seemed to be debating some question with herself.

"We can't go back the same way," she decided. "We might meet those men. If Harve Thorsen is too badly hurt to travel they may be carrying him here to the dam right now. Even if he's all right, they'll be slow getting back with only two horses for the three of 'em. There's another road lower down. It's longer, but we've got to take it."

She turned the team away from the pass and followed a narrow, winding road which led them presently into a deep, wooded valley. The rain was falling now in drenching sheets. The night had suddenly grown almost as black as pitch.

"It's about time to explain, ain't it?" said Johnnie at last. "How'd you get hold of this wagon? And where's Benner?"

Amy gave a shrug of her shoulders. "Gosh, Johnnie! I wish I knew," she exclaimed with a shiver. "I'm afraid

he's heading straight for Sheriff Bill Newcomb!"

Johnnie was no less bewildered than before. "I don't get the idea," he grumbled. "Why should he be heading for the sheriff? And, anyhow, that ain't explaining how you got hold of his team."

"It's his missing team that he'll be going to the sheriff about," said Amy. "He was held up on his way to Silver Gap to-night and robbed of horses and wagon and pay money."

For a moment Johnnie tried to puzzle out this mystery; but it was to deep for him. He gave it up.

"I was the bandit that robbed him," said Amy.

"Huh? You!"

"What else could I have done? It was the only way to save poor old Luke from a real robbery. And I was that mad at Jed Thorsen that I was ready to take all kinds of risks to spoil his game. After you four men left the ranch, I jumped on Winnie, my mare, and followed you. But I stopped and waited for Luke to come along three miles before getting to the pass. I had an old rifle that belonged to my father. It's in the bottom of the wagon right now. But it isn't good for anything. The hammer's broken off, and the barrel's full of rust. But it was enough to fool Luke. I'm still hoping he didn't recognize me in the dark. My hat was pulled down low, and my coat collar was turned up. I had a bandanna tied round my face, so probably he didn't. But I can't help worrying. Still, when he gets his team back and finds the money's been turned in safe at the dam he can't have any very serious kick coming."

Johnnie could see so many kinds of trouble brewing that the prospect dazed him for a moment.

"Good heavens!" he said, groaning. "How you goin' to get his team back to him?"

"I don't know. I haven't had time to think it out. But that's one of the least of my troubles. What bothers me most just now is whether I'm going to beat the men back to the ranch. I had to turn Winnie loose up in the hills. She'll find her way back home, of course, but if Jed finds her there, waiting with her saddle and bridle on, and me gone, he'll be doing some hard thinking."

Johnnie himself was doing some particularly hard thinking at this moment. He hadn't forgotten the vivid flash of lightning that had illumined Amy's face at the top of the pass. The three men in hiding above on the hillside had been watching closely at that moment. Had they recognized the girl? He felt quite sure they must have done so.

With a startled gasp Amy pulled up the horses. "Have I gone loco?" she cried. "Here I am bringing you back with me—back into the trouble I've been trying to save you from! What am I going to do with you, anyhow? It would be better to drop you off anywhere out here in the hills than to bring you back within reach of Jed. You can't go back to the dam, for he and Steve may have carried Harve there."

"Drive on!" muttered Johnnie. "You an' me are headed fer the same place. So long as you're in danger, it's up to me t'stick to you like a bur, kid. And I'm agoin' t'do it."

Amy started the horses. For a few minutes as they passed on through the deep blackness of the rain-swept valley she spoke not a word.

"Yeah," Johnnie muttered as if to himself after a long interval of silence. "I'll stick to you like a bur, kid."

"You're heading for suicide—that's what you're doing, you idiot!" she cried raspingly. "You haven't got a chance!"

"No, Amy, I ain't aimin' at suicide. But I may be aimin' at murder if I get my hands on Jed."

Presently she began to argue with

him. How could he hope to square accounts with a gunman like Jed? And what could he expect to happen if he should return with her to the ranch? She reasoned that he was talking like a lunatic.

"I've got my dander up, and I've got a gun, and it's loaded," answered Johnnie, "and I'm agoin' ter take a chance with luck. I've allus heard that if luck ever does turn good fer a hard-luck guy like me, it turns fast and sudden."

CHAPTER VIII.

PLUMB LOCO.

BY the time the little ranch came into sight through the roaring rain, it was long after daybreak. Hoboken Johnnie's mulish stubbornness had reduced Amy to the verge of tears. Miles back she had decided he had gone "plumb loco." Surely only a man who was suffering from at least a touch of madness would be bent so persistently on returning to the trap from which she had tried so hard to save him. As the ranch buildings slowly emerged into view from behind an intervening ridge, she made a final and almost hysterical plea to dissuade him from his reckless obstinacy.

"Now, looka here, Amy," he protested; "you may think I'm crazy, but I ain't—not by a long shot. I've been thinkin' this thing out, and I'm beginnin' t'see my way pretty clear. If the luck runs any good a-tall mebbe you an' me'll come through this mess o' troube O. K. You stop the team now an' lemme out. I'm goin' the rest o' the way, walkin'."

"If I leave the team here, they'll find the way to Luke Benner's barn," she suggested, "while if I don't they'll give me away. They might smash up the wagon some on their way home, but it's better to take a chance of that than to have them with me as evidence of what I've been up to."

Johnnie shook his head against this proposition. "You drive 'em right on into the ranch," he commanded, "and put 'em in the horse shed. Then you stay there. If the men come lookin' fer you, you hide from 'em round in that dark corner where the saddles hang. Y'understand?"

Johnnie seemed so sure of himself, that a feeble confidence in him was beginning to take hold of Amy. He might be suffering from a touch of madness, but she had heard that madmen were inspired with genius sometimes. In her desperation she was ready to take a chance—a wild bet—on whatever form of insanity he had developed. So, driving on alone after he had left the wagon, she proceeded to follow his instructions blindly. She couldn't understand what they meant, but it was too late to question them now.

Johnnie, leaving the road and making a bee line over the ridge for the outbuildings, was in the horse shed before she arrived. He had managed on his way to keep out of the view commanded by the windows of the house. Soaked to the skin, with a little pool of water forming around his sopping feet, he stood just inside the doorway for a moment sharply surveying the dim interior. At one end, under the thatched roof, was a high platform, half filled with alfalfa. Carrying his rifle, he dragged his big, dripping figure up the ladder that led to it. It was dark up there—so dark now with the heavy storm raging outside that he could even crouch close to the edge without risk of being discovered by anybody entering the shed.

When presently Amy came in with Luke Benner's horses she looked about for him in deep perplexity. After a moment he coughed, and, glancing up, she found him.

"Don't talk, kid," he whispered. "Somebody may be comin'."

He was quite sure that at least one

of the men must have observed the girl from the house as she came driving up to the shed with the horses and wagon. He had no doubt that two of them, at any rate, had returned, for the horses of Jed and Steve were now in the shed.

Two or three minutes had passed when, rising sonorously above the sound of the rain, a deep voice from the direction of the house bellowed Amy's name. The girl looked up at Johnnie but did not move from the dark corner where she had stationed herself. The voice called again and again. At last, having roused no answer, it drew nearer. Then came a rasping oath, and a moment later Jed Thorsen's tall figure appeared in the doorway. For a few seconds, he stood blinking into the shadows that lay before him. The fact that he had received no answer to his calls seemed to have bewildered him. There could be no doubt in his mind that Amy had been there and that, unless she had run out into the rain to conceal herself somewhere, she must be there now.

He had seen her driving up through the storm, and now the wagon was outside and Luke Benner's horses were in the stalls. His eyes blazed with fury. If he had not been in such feverish eagerness to find her, he would have waited for her at the house, for the search had already cost him a thorough drenching. He was without coat or vest, but, true to the instinct of his belligerent kind, he was armed, as always. His short-barreled revolver was hanging in a shoulder holster over his blue shirt. Some men might prefer to wear their guns at their hips, but not Jed. He chose to have his weapon where he could draw it without waste of time. It would have taken a fraction of a second longer to pull it up from the hip.

Stepping in from the doorway he began to look about the place more closely. He would discover her presently if he got as far as the corner where the saddles hung. He was standing close to the ladder leading to the platform when he was startled by Johnnie's quick, sudden cry, "Put 'em up!"

Jed's long body stiffened as if an electric current had run through it, but, instinctively, his hands had gone up. The next moment he discovered his escaped prisoner crouching on the edge of the platform. Also he did not fail to observe the rifle Johnnie was aiming at him and whose muzzle was scarcely four feet from his head.

If Johnnie had been armed only with a pistol, Jed would probably have taken the risk involved in pulling the gun that hung in the holster, for it would have taken him scarcely more than an infinitesimal fraction of a second to get it out. When he caught sight of the rifle he paused to consider the situation. It was his own rifle, and he remembered that he had been careful to extract the cartridges before leaving for Silver Gap. But he could also remember that only a few hours ago Johnnie, armed with either this rifle or another, had shot Brother Harve's horse from under him. After a moment, he decided it would not be discreet to assume that the rifle was still unloaded.

Yet the situation, instead of alarming Jed, was beginning to amuse him. He was a gun fighter of long experience, and the man behind the rifle had stirred his contempt from the very beginning of their acquaintance. His mind refused to consider this hard-luck guy from New York as a serious menace. He looked up at the face that was peering over the edge of the platform and grinned.

"It's your deal, brother," said Jed impatiently.

"It sure is," Johnnie agreed. "And I got a hand full o' aces. I'm comin' down to borra that shootin' iron you're carryin', and then we'll have a little talk."

"I'll pass it up ter yuh," Jed offered amiably.

"Don't bother 'bout doin' that. I guess I can get it outa that holster without any help."

Without shifting the aim of the rifle, he began to move slowly toward the ladder. He was feeling his way instead of looking for it, for he knew he couldn't afford to turn his gaze from the watchful man below for even the fraction of a second. His feet found their way along the ladder, to which, by moving with the greatest deliberation, he managed to cling at the same time that he kept Jed covered with the gun. Jed's eyes were like steel as they watched his progress and one of his upraised hands was drooping a little nearer to the pistol in the holster. The experienced gunman was trying to calculate whether, in the fraction of a second that he might require to pull out his weapon, Johnnie's loose, clumsy forefinger could tighten on the trigger of the rifle. He was tempted to take the chance, but he hesitated. Johnnie might be very much quicker than he really looked.

After squirming his way down to the bottom of the ladder Johnnie poked the muzzle of the rifle into Jed's ribs, pulled the pistol from the holster, and, stepping backward to the big, sliding door of the shed, closed it. For an instant he seemed slightly troubled by the fact that on this side of it there was neither lock nor fastening.

Then he did a surprising thing. He dropped the pistol and the rifle on the floor. To Amy, watching from her hiding place among the saddles, this action was the final, conclusive bit of evidence that convicted him of having lost his reason.

Jed was drawing stealthily nearer with a movement so slow and even that it was almost imperceptible. Then, with his eyes on the guns, he sprang. A short-arm jab from Johnnie caught him under the jaw and sent him staggering dizzily backward.

"Come on, Jed!" cried Johnnie cheerfully. "I'm offerin' yuh a fair chance. I ain't goin' to try no gun play."

Infuriated by the blow, Jed came, with the speed of a panther. He struck and missed; again he was met by that deadly short-arm jab, which caught him in the ribs this time and knocked the wind out of him. Dropping to the floor, he made a grab for the revolver, and it was only barely in time that Johnnie stamped a heel down upon the reaching hand. With a half-stifled grunt of pain, Jed pulled the hand back and staggered up. His eyes were blazing; baffled fury was driving him frantic. He was mouthing incoherent curses.

"You ain't had enough yet," Johnnie decided as he drove a fist into one of Jed's eyes. "You ain't got more'n half what I owe you. I'm on'y just gettin' warmed up ter this job, bo. 'Fore I'm through you're goin' t' look more like a jellyfish than a human bein'."

From Amy came a cry of alarm. The door was opening.

Johnnie waited just long enough for one more punch. It caught Jed just below the point of the jaw, a vital spot. The gunman wilted and dropped. Then Johnnie stooped swiftly and picked up the rifle. As he straightened up with the weapon in his hands, the fat figure of Steve Garner appeared in the doorway.

Steve's popeyes turned to the unconscious Jed and then to the rifle. The noise made by the storm had prevented him from hearing distinctly anything of what had been going on inside the shed, and he was not prepared for the situation he now found. With a startled gasp he drew back. He was just too late. The rifle had him covered. Another backward step would bring him behind the door and out of sight, where he might prepare for hostilities, but it seemed quite likely that a

bullet would catch him before he could take it.

"Come on in, Steve," cried Johnnie. "You're welcome."

Steve hesitated; then seemed to decide it would be wiser to accept the invitation. He moved slowly forward, looking bewildered and helpless. There was a gun sticking up from his hip, and as he came waddling in Johnnie promptly took possession of it. He dropped the weapon into his pocket, for his acquaintance with revolvers was slight and he preferred the rifle.

"Now, Steve, you move over there against the wall where you won't be tempted to try any tricks," Johnnie commanded.

Steve observed that the rifle was pointing straight at his stomach, and he was not slow obeying. When he had stationed himself a few feet away he stared at his captor reproachfully.

"Brother," he protested, "d'yuh call this gratitood arter we was aimin' ter turn yuh loose with plenty of money in yuhr clo'es ter take yuh back home?"

"I'll show how grateful I am if you ain't mighty careful," muttered Johnnie. "Where's 'Brother Harve?' And don't be tellin' any lies."

"He's up in the house with a busted leg that he got from that tumble he took when yuh killed his hoss. What's happened ter Jed?"

"Well, take a good look at him and figger it out fer yurself, Steve. I've got a mighty strong temptation t'give you the same kind of a lesson he's been gettin', you fat, popeyed crook. But I guess you ain't worth botherin' with."

Jed was beginning to stir. One of his eyes opened. The other one was turning black.

Presently he sat up with a groan, and the open eye glared venomously at Johnnie.

"Yuh poor bum!" he muttered. "How long d'yuh figger yuh're goin' ter live arter I've started gunnin' fer yuh?"

CHAPTER IX.

BROTHER HARVE.

THE ominous question of Jed's troubled Hoboken Johnnie. It brought a sudden painful realization of the fact that his immediate future was precarious, to say the least. With only half a dollar in his possession it didn't seem likely he would be able to get out of Jed's reach before the gunman had started on his trail. For the present he was master of the situation, and he proceeded to make the best of his opportunities.

"Jed, I've noticed you've been carryin' the key to that place where you had me locked up," he said significantly. "S'pose you hand it over."

As he raised himself feebly to his feet, Jed turned the corner of an eye to his gun, which was lying ten feet away from him on the floor. He also observed that the rifle was covering him steadily, and his hope of recovering his weapon faded. The key of the tool house was in his pocket, and, feeling sure it would be forced from him if he should fail to give up, he pulled it out and tossed it to his captor.

"Now you and Steve march straight to that coop where you had me penned up," Johnnie commanded.

When, a few moments later, he closed the door of the tool house on his two prisoners and turned the key in the padlock, he breathed easier. He turned away with a gleam of triumph in his eyes. He was wet and tired and hungry, but he had the thrill of a conqueror as he came back to Amy in the horse shed.

"Kid, mebbe I'm loco, but you can't say I ain't made good so far," he declared proudly.

"Yes—so far," she admitted with an anxious frown. "But I have a feeling that the worst is yet to come. You've had a wonderful streak of luck, but now what's going to happen? Did you

ever hear of the man who had caught an elephant by the tail and dassen't let go? The fix he was in was simple compared to yours. Whenever Jed gets loose, you won't be safe within a thousand miles of here. I think you'd better jump a horse and ride."

Johnnie looked doubtful. "How 'bout you?" he asked. "You couldn't stay here with those three crooks. They've got most as much reason to hate you as they have me. You've got three horses. Couldn't you pack up whatever stuff you've got on 'em and beat it outa here along with me?"

Amy shook her head dejectedly. "I've no money, and no place to go—and we've forgotten about Harve. We aren't even sure yet that he's been hurt. Steve may have been lying." With a little shiver she turned anxious eyes to the open door. "Keep that rifle ready, Johnnie. He may come sneaking in here any moment. And if he does, you won't get the drop on him like you did on Steve. Harve's clever."

Indeed even if Steve had told the truth, Harvey might still be dangerous. A broken leg wouldn't prevent him from using a gun. He could not be aware of what had happened to his brother and Steve, for the men, while on the way from the shed to the place where they were now confined, had not been in view from the house. Yet he might well suspect something had gone wrong. No matter how ignorant he might be of what had been going on in the shed, he might feel peevish enough to take a shot at Johnnie merely on the strength of what had happened at Silver Gap.

Amy's face was full of troubled apprehension. "He may be up there looking out," she suggested. "If he got sight of you he might blaze away from a door or a window. But he wouldn't shoot at me. I'd better go up there first and find out how dangerous he is."

Though it might be true that Johnnie Henderson had gone loco, he had not lost a sense of caution. Although he might be a poor mark on his way through the storm, he had heard that Brother Harve was a dead shot.

"All right, kid," he agreed, unwilling to believe Harvey had not been damaged too much by his fall to be a serious menace. "I'll wait here in the shed till you come back and report."

Left alone, Johnnie proceeded to consider matters in general. The hard-luck guy was feeling thoroughly satisfied with himself. Having brought up with a hard bump at the bottom of the grade of ill fortune, desperation had stirred his sluggish mind and had turned it into a thinking machine of proven efficiency. He couldn't quite see his way clear to the end of his troubles yet, but there was reason to feel hopeful. But before long his face clouded with fast-growing anxiety. He had expected Amy to return at once, and now ten or fifteen minutes had passed. For five or ten minutes longer, he remained in the shed. Then he became convinced something was wrong. He stepped out into the rain and made his way quickly to the house, keeping a sharp eye out for danger.

At the kitchen door he stopped to listen. There was not a sound except the storm. Cautiously he pushed the door open. The kitchen was empty. Holding his rifle ready for action, he stepped into the narrow hallway. Amy's room was open; so was Jed's, but there was no sign of the girl nor of Harvey.

The door of Harvey's room was closed. Softly he tiptoed to it. From inside came some slight, indefinite sound. He opened the door quickly.

For an instant he saw Amy standing in the center of the room. On the bed lay Harvey, gripping a revolver. Then the revolver spoke, and a bullet, whistling so close to the intruder's ear that he could feel the sting of it, bored through the half-open door.

Though the shot had missed him, Johnnie dropped to his hands and knees. In fact, he had already started to throw himself forward when the shot came. Instinctively he had known as soon as he caught sight of the man on the bed that this was his only way to save himself.

He couldn't see Harvey now, and Harvey couldn't see him, for the footboard of the bed intervened. Evidently Steve had told the truth, and it seemed scarcely likely that Harvey, with a broken leg, could change his position.

There was a moment of dead silence. Then the man on the bed made an effort to raise himself, and sank back with a groan of pain. For a few seconds he lay, with his gun pointed at the foot of the bed. He could have shot through the footboard, but Johnnie might be keeping too close to the floor to be hit. Harve's mind was working rapidly. His situation was far from safe, for he realized that Johnnie could also shoot through the footboard and trust to luck. But long experience had taught Harve many tricks in dealing with situations not unlike this. His eyes were fastened like a hawk's on the space beyond the foot of the bed. His ears were straining to catch some sound that would indicate the invader's position.

"Brother," Harve said presently, "I had a notion somethin' must be wrong, so I been keepin' this kid here till I could find out what was up. My gun's coverin' her right now. Yuh move, an' I'm goin' ter shoot. And the bullet won't be fer yuh, brother. It'll be fer her. I'm listenin', an' I kin hear yuh if yuh so much as budge."

The threat might be only a bluff, but Johnnie didn't dare test it. From all he had learned about Brother Harve the man might be capable of any despicable act if hard pressed, as he was now.

"Yuh slide that rifle out across the floor, brother, where I kin see it," Harve commanded.

Johnnie hesitated. Then his heart seemed to stop beating as there came a sound of footsteps from the hall. Amy screamed hysterically. "It's Jed!" she cried. "He's got out somehow."

The man who presented himself in the doorway the next moment was not Jed but Sheriff Bill Newcomb, his badge of office conspicuously displayed on his vest.

The sheriff's long, lanky figure stiffened with surprise as with a quick glance he took in the situation. His sharp little eyes shifted in perplexity from the crouching figure on the floor to the man on the bed, and then to the girl.

"It looks like I'd come at the right time," he observed after a moment with a grin. "What's the meaning of all this, anyhow?"

"Bill, this is the hombre yuh've been lookin' fer," said Harvey. "He's the bum the freight brought in, the one that stole Jed's hoss. And if he don't git ten years, there ain't no justice in this county."

CHAPTER X.

CONVINCING EVIDECE.

SIX feet and two inches of hard luck straightened up from the floor and turned defiantly but hopelessly to Sheriff Bill Newcomb. There was not a ghost of a chance here, Hoboken Johnnie was sure, for outraged innocence. Bill Newcomb, according to Amy, was hand in glove with the two Thorsens and Steve Garner, and would welcome this opportunity of serving them.

The sheriff seemed to be in no hurry to act. His eyes fastened curiously on the man on the bed. "What's the matter with you, Harve?" he asked. "Sick?"

"Had an accident, Bill. My leg's busted. Fell from my hoss."

The sheriff shook his head sym-

pathetically. "Too bad, Harve. Good hoss, too. Hard luck to lose him."

"Huh? How come you know erbout me losin' him?"

"Well, Harve, I happened to find that hoss lying dead beside the road out at Silver Gap. It was your blue roan all right. There couldn't be any mistake about it. And there was a bullet hole in his head. I thought that maybe he'd broken a leg, and you'd had to shoot him, but I looked him over and there wasn't a broken bone anywhere."

Harvey hesitated. He might offer a ready explanation of what had happened to the horse, for he could be an artful liar when he chose, but he couldn't be sure how much of that night's events might be divulged by the man who was now standing with the rifle at the foot of the bed, or even by the girl. He had recognized Amy when the lightning revealed her face clearly at the top of the pass. However, he was not very deeply worried. Bill Newcomb was his friend, and Jed's and Steve's; he had more than once intimated that if any or all of the three ever got into trouble they could look to him to get them out of it. Bill had even hinted that if they should ever try any crooked work in that part of the country, he might be induced to share in the profits. There weren't any profits from last night's unfortunate adventure, but all the same there could be nothing to fear from the sheriff.

"I'll tell yuh the story of what happened to that hoss some other time, Bill," said Harvey. "It's a long one, an' I don't wanta talk erbout it now. Yuh seen Jed or Steve anywheres?"

"Not yet," the sheriff answered. "But I want to see 'em bad. And I'd like to know what Luke Benner's team's doing here. Maybe you can tell me something about that, Amy. Up at the dam they say a girl that looked like you was driving that team last night, and that she got a receipt for the pay money Luke was supposed to be bringing. After Luke reported he'd been held up I hit the road for the Gap. Since then I've been learning considerable."

Bill Newcomb winked an eye at the man on the bed. "Something mighty queer going on last night, Harve. You lie patient here for a while till I see if I can't get to the bottom of it all. Amy, I guess you and me and this stranger had better move along to some place where we can talk things over quiet."

In the kitchen a moment later the sheriff turned sharply questioning eyes to Hoboken Johnnie. "Stranger, I've got you dead to rights," he muttered. "Now you talk. And don't be trying any lies or I'm liable to check up on you. I've got a good strong notion you know what's become of Jed Thorsen and Steve Garner. Their hosses are here and look as if they'd been ridden hard, so it's mighty queer neither of those two hombres are in sight anywheres." He stared suspiciously at Johnnie's rifle, as though he suspected the weapon had brought the careers of the two absent men to a sudden termination.

"Tell him the truth, Johnnie," cried Amy, "We can't keep it from him. He'd be sure to find out everything in time."

Johnnie heaved a despairing sigh. "I can see I ain't got a chance," he grumbled, "but I s'pose I might as well show you where those two guys are. I can prove I haven't killed 'em, though killin's no more'n what they deserve." His eyes fastened on the rifle, which was still in his hands. "S'pose I better pass over this gun to you, too, sheriff. I got no more use fer it, and you'll be thinkin' I ain't safe keepin' it. It ain't mine, anyhow."

Bill Newcomb refused the weapon with a scornful wave of his hand. He had been keeping his eyes on it, but he was too quick on the draw to be afraid

of Hoboken Johnnie. "It ain't yours?" he said. "Then whose is it?"

"It's Jed Thorsen's. He loaned it to me last night t'hold up the pay wagon at Silver Gap, though I know there ain't no chance you believin' that."

"It's the truth, sheriff," cried Amy. "And you're going to know it's the truth, no matter how much you want to side with the Thorsens and Garner. They were trying to force this stranger to hold up the pay wagon for them."

"Huh?" The sheriff narrowed his eyes and studied the girl's face sharply. Then he turned to Johnnie. "Where you got these fellers?"

"I've got 'em locked up in the tool house down behind the horse shed," Johnnie admitted promptly.

Bill Newcomb grinned broadly. "So you got the drop on 'em, eh, and held 'em up? Gosh! I'd never have believed it. Just fool luck you must have played in, boy."

He dropped heavily into a chair and stared up at Hoboken Johnnie with an interest that had suddenly become intense. "I guess we can let 'em stay in that tool house for a while," he decided. "I've got to hear right now how you did the trick, stranger. Whenever I get wind of a good story, I have to stop and listen, no matter what pressing business lies ahead of me."

Hours ago Johnnie had made up his mind to play an open hand when he should find himself in the meshes of the law. He was going to put all his cards on the table. It was the only way—his only chance on earth. He looked squarely into Bill Newcomb's face and saw something there that stirred a feeble hope. Then he proceeded to tell his story—the whole story, from the time of his arrival by freight and his escape on Jed's horse from his pursuers. With Amy as a corroborative witness, who every now and then interrupted Johnnie's narrative to tell her own side of it, Bill Newcomb, as he studied the faces of the pair, knew he was listening to the truth.

There was a moment of silence when Johnnie came to the end of his adventures. The story had been complete in every detail. Amy, herself, had supplied the account of how she had held up Luke Benner. The sheriff was stroking his chin thoughtfully. Presently he laughed.

"Brother," he said, "if anybody else had brought a charge of hoss stealing against you out in this country you might be in a bad fix. But it looks to me now like Jed and Harve and Steve are the fellers that are going up for a good, stiff term instead of you. They've been thinking I'm a friend of theirs. And I've done my darnedest to let 'em think so.

"Ever since I found out that three Texas crooks had bought this place, I've been trying to get all three of 'em dead to rights. That's where I believe I've got 'em now. I can prove a bad record against every one of 'em in Texas, and with the evidence I've got, no jury raised round here is going to refuse to convict 'em for trying to steal that pay money from Luke's wagon. Now, brother, s'pose we go down to that tool house and take a look at those two birds. It's time I was taking 'em along to jail, though it looks like I've got to leave Brother Harve here till I can send a wagon for him."

Hoboken Johnnie stood staring at the sheriff stupidly. Then suddenly he pulled his dazed wits together, and turned to Amy.

"Kid, I guess you was right 'bout me havin' gone loco when we got back here to the ranch. But if I can on'y keep on bein' that way it looks like I'd soon be leavin' hard luck a long ways behind and make somethin' of myself."

Then all three went out into the rain, and presently they were standing at the tool-house door.

"I've brought along an old friend of you two guys," Johnnie announced to the two prisoners as he turned the key in the padlock and opened the door wide.

Jed fastened his one good eye on the sheriff and greeted him with a savage oath of relief.

"Bill," he roared, "lemme borrer yuhr gun a minute. I gotta shoot that measly varmint yuh've got thar full o' holes or bust. I'm goin' ter save yuh the trouble of takin' him ter jail."

Bill Newcomb raised his gun, but instead of passing it to Jed he pointed the muzzle at him menacingly. "Jed, this stranger's going free," he announced. "But you ain't. And neither is Steve, nor Harve. I've been aiming to get you three crooks for a long time, and here is where I pull the trick."

That night Amy and Hoboken Johnnie found themselves on the ranch alone. The two Thorsens and Steve Garner were safely lodged by that time in the county jail. Even Steve's cat was gone. He had taken Pansy to his cell with him. And they, too, would be gone before long.

The storm had passed, and the stars were out. Together they sat in the kitchen doorway looking out over the ranges.

"I've been calling myself a hard-luck guy," Johnnie told her. "But it looks like the luck had started running the other way now. If I could get a job round here somewheres——"

Abruptly he paused. He had been about to say he might be able to support a wife before long, but there had flashed from the depths of his memory a scene in a New York warehouse, the report of a gun, and a policeman falling in the doorway.

"Well, what were you going to say?" Amy asked, turning to him and puckering her forehead in perplexity as she saw the troubled expression that had suddenly come into his face.

"I guess I better not say it," muttered Johnnie. "Not yet, anyhow."

It was not until months later that he did say it, and much had happened in that time. The two Thorsens and Steve Garner had been convicted and sent to prison. The ranch had been sold at auction, and the man who bought it was the head of the company building the dam at Silver Gap. He immediately transferred the title to Amy Dollard. He said she deserved that much of a gift for having saved the company's pay money. For a while she leased the place as a range to a neighboring cattleman, and Hoboken Johnnie drifted away to Denver to hunt for a job.

It was in a downtown Denver street that he just chanced to meet Blackie Muller.

Blackie had said, "Why, bo, you don't hafta stay away from the big town no longer. That cop was outa the hospital in less'n two weeks, and the bulls never got wise to who was on that job anyhow. I been livin' in the old burg myself until a few weeks ago, and I was never bein' bothered."

An hour later Hoboken Johnnie gave up his job and headed for the railroad station. He was on his way back to Amy.

Slat's First Rodeo

BY

Ray Humphreys

Author of "Ol' Bald Face," etc.

IT was the first rodeo that Slats had ever staged. The reputation of the town was at stake, so that Eddie Owens, Joe Myers, and Fred Warren, of the committee in charge, were galloping furiously here and there, on the track, in the arena, and around the corrals, trying to snap the program through in a businesslike way.

"Ain't nuthin' like runnin' events off fast to keep up interest," Eddie had said. "Many a rodeo has fallen down just because it dragged. Hey yuh, yuh trick ropers, git out on the track an' do yuhr stuff!"

"Yuh're fourteen seconds late!" added Joe Myers, as the gay-shirted ropers leaped the infield fence and started to snake their ropes into action before the crowded grand stands.

Eddie, Joe, and Fred meant well, in trying to push the show through on schedule. They had reckoned without due regard to the fact that this was Slats' first rodeo, and men and animals alike were green and unprofessional. Slats, nestled in a valley of the San de Cristo range country, drew her rodeo contestants and her rodeo stock from the back hills, and this did not make for a speedy performance.

The show, however, was substantial, if slow. The big, heavy range horses that were the pride of the San Luis country bucked and fought like Cheyenne outlaws. Nothing could be said against their willingness to toss their riders sky high. The riders, themselves, were a choice lot, not given to vanity and show, perhaps, but doing their best to ride the buckers despite all heck. It was the same with the ropers and the handful of fancy riders and the rest of the gang—slow, shy, but willing and trying very hard to please the crowds.

"'Nother year," said Joe Myers, "an' some o' these broomtails will know *how* to buck an' can give better accounts o' their meanness, I reckon——"

"'Nother year," agreed Fred Warren, "an' yuh'll see some o' these boys reg'lar ridin' fools, whoopin' an' scratchin' an' wavin' their hats an' all the time ridin' high, wide an' handsome. All they lacks now is experience!"

"Hey, yuh birds," cried Eddie Owens, riding up on his gray mare, "scatter an' help me git out them bulldawgers. They're next on the program an' blame me ef I can find half o' them—seems they just drapped outta sight and——"

"No loss at that," muttered Warren.

He wheeled his horse and jogged away as Owens had directed.

What Warren had said was undoubtedly true. The first Slats rodeo bulldoggers were a poor-looking lot. Several sturdy ranchers, a few gawky riders, two or three clumsy strangers—these were the entrants in the Slats bulldogging event.

Bulldogging, as far as the back-hills country saw it, wasn't an attractive sport at all. In fact, the committee in charge of the rodeo had actually to instruct a few of the awkward contestants in the art of falling off a galloping pony, grasping a running steer by its horns, and twisting its neck until it finally sagged on its braced legs and toppled over sideways.

"But what would a rodeo be without a bullodggin' event?" Eddie Owens had asked. So it was included.

As the bulldoggers gathered in the far end of the arena, their ponies at hand, the crowd set up a big yell. Here was to be one of the really thrilling events of the whole day's program. A bunch of long-horned steers, fresh from the range, ugly, and ready, milled in the corral. An official called out a name, and a rider dashed out of the group as the first steer was released. He was too slow, that rider, and the flag was dropped by the timer before he had overtaken the steer. The next man out bungled his job, too.

The committee, sitting their horses in grim silence, sighed unhappily, but the crowd was still in a jovial mood. One of the prospective bulldoggers, a big, hulking stranger that nobody seemed to know, was helping to keep the crowd amused. Every time a contestant started after a steer he laughed, and his laugh echoed the length and breadth of the arena. The crowd laughed with him, as well as at him, for he had a fiery red blanket draped over one shoulder, despite the fact that the thermometer was touching ninety-nine.

"Who is that big buzzard with the loud laugh?" asked Eddie Owens, sighting the merry giant.

Nobody knew.

"He sure is givin' them amateurs the hoss laugh," said Fred Warren. "Which means that he must know something about the game an' must be figgerin' on going out an' cleanin' up."

"Let's hope he does," said Joe Myers, "seein' thar ain't been no bulldawgin' yet—I don't remember that big bimbo askin' no lessons so he must know his stuff!"

Another would-be bulldogger chased a steer halfway down the arena and grabbed for the horns but missed. He sprawled in the dust, and the steer turned in its tracks to threaten him. He got up and ran like a rabbit.

"Hoo-hoo!" roared the big fellow, and the rest of the crowds laughed with him, while the committee shivered, although it was still a hot day. Almost all of the would-be bulldoggers had tried their luck, and still nothing in the way of bulldogging had been seen. A gawky youth remained, and the big giant, and——

Soon the gawky youth had had his turn and failed. Now the big giant with the blanket was to try!

It was only then, when his turn had come, that the committee noticed that the giant had no horse.

Before any one could think, the big fellow had waved to the corral men to release a steer. The stranger, spreading his blanket on the breeze, hopped out in front of the brindle steer that trotted out of the corral.

"What the——" began Eddie, but his exclamation was swallowed up in the frenzied roar that went up from the grand stands.

The brindle steer, seemingly twice as much surprised as the committee was, took one startled, belligerent look at the flaming red blanket; then it sank its head with a bellow and charged. The

grand stands held their breath—but the big cowboy, light as a cat, skipped nimbly to one side, letting the brindle breeze past like a young cyclone. The crowds sighed in quick relief.

The steer, however, was not through. It skidded to a sudden stop, swung round, and rushed the cowboy again.

"Yank that galoot outta there, some one!" cried Eddie Owens, but his cries were lost in the uproar. The steer, breathing deep, rumbling threats, came on. This time it brushed past the cowboy with barely three inches to spare. The grand stands shouted wildly. It was the first time that audience had seen a man on foot go out to play tag with a wild-range steer. The steer didn't have its horns bobbed, either!

"He'll be killed," said Eddie woefully, while Joe Myers and Fred Warren stared. "Somebody ought to——"

The steer, returning to take another running plunge at the cowboy, cut Eddie short.

"E-ee-oww!" yipped the cow hand. He danced out ahead of the steer, waving his blanket energetically. The steer, twisting its head slightly to one side, so that it might catch its annoyer with the nearest horn, came on with a rumble.

Again it missed its mark and shot well past the cow hand, who chuckled as he ducked to one side with a flip of the fiery red blanket. The crowds howled in glee.

"What's the big idear?" asked a puncher, galloping up. "Who is that bird an' what's the idear o' him hoggin' all the applause—he's gettin' more hand than anybody——"

"Search me!" answered Eddie unhappily. "Yuh git some o' the boys an' go out an' rope that steer an' put an end to that foolishness; t'aint right an'——"

"No, ma'am!" said the puncher decidedly, "not me. That ol' longhorn is all het up—git somebody else to rope 'im!"

The brindle surely was "het up." His wicked eyes fairly smoldered with rage, and his rough and mottled hide glistened with perspiration. He mouthed low rumblings, and his tail lashed to and fro like a tiger's, as he whirled, charged, and did his mightiest to ram the human tormentor who wielded the red blanket.

As for the big, sure-footed cowboy, he seemed to be having the time of his life—although he, too, was perspiring freely. His antics were slowing up to a marked degree; he was tiring.

The crowd was yelling itself hysterical.

"Shoo steer! Shoo steer!"

"Scare 'im! Scare 'im, cowboy!"

"Hook 'im, cow!"

The rodeo committee, sitting on their fidgeting horses, were uttering no such encouraging shouts to either man or beast. It was a terrible thing, they decided, that this clown should so upset the dignified procedure of the show by pulling off such a disgraceful burlesque of a Spanish bullfight, although, at that, the exhibition had all the earmarks of the real article, because the steer happened to be especially mean, and the cowboy, whether he sensed it or not, was in actual and great danger.

The steer was ambitious, too. It had evidently made up its mind that the one thing in life for it to do was to catch this cowboy and toss him for a goal. It returned again and again to the charge, while the grand stands rocked with the thunder of applause. Some spectators were rooting for the brindle steer, and others were yipping for the daring cow hand.

"Look out!" cried Eddie suddenly.

The steer, circling around to one side of the matador, who was bowing his thanks to the stands, was charging again, now, like a veritable whirlwind. The cowboy caught the motion out of the corner of one eye and wheeled and flipped the blanket in the animal's face, at the same time side-stepping to avoid

the rush. This time he wasn't quick enough. One sharp horn slit the blanket as evenly as a knife would have done—and the smile vanished from the cowboy's face.

"Whew!" exclaimed the crowd.

"That was close!" cried Eddie. "We'd better——"

Before he could finish his remark the steer had returned to the encounter, encouraged and with renewed vigor, it seemed. The big cow hand abandoned the blanket and began an active dodging that caused the crowd to hold its breath. The steer, advancing in short, quick rushes, backed the cowboy down the field.

"Now he's a goner!" exclaimed some one, groaning.

The cowboy was not smiling, and his face was set in grim, hard lines. The ten minutes he had been frolicking with the steer seemed a lifetime, now that he was wearying of the struggle. The steer was taking advantage of its opportunities and was making more and better directed rushes. It just missed its mark half a dozen times in succession.

"Run, yuh idjut!" somebody yelled.

It was poor advice, but the cowboy heeded it. He whirled quickly and ran —ran awkwardly in his high-heeled boots, which were not made for foot racing. The steer was surprised for a moment, but he lowered his head and flashed off in pursuit.

It looked as if it would be a short race. Eddie Owens turned his face away—a face that was sickly green in color. Joe Myers swore softly, Fred Warren gulped.

Then came a wild roar from the crowd.

Eddie, glancing back to the arena, saw that the cowboy, striking some soft sand, had stumbled and fallen. But he had retained his senses at that. Realizing he had no time to get to his feet he had huddled himself up, protecting his head, ostrichlike, under his body. The next minute the steer struck, and somersaulted heels over head in a grand semicircle. It had struck the cowboy with its head and not its horns.

"Wow!" cried Joe Myers.

The steer landed on its shoulders some yards away. The cowboy, sitting up, rubbed his head, felt his arms and shoulders.

Then, as he saw the steer scrambling to its feet he got to his feet, a bit unsteadily, and swayed there for a moment. But the steer had had enough. It turned and glared once at the cowboy, and then it walked slowly away—stiffly and with injured pride—toward the corrals. The grand stands flared forth in renewed applause.

"Oh, yuh champeen!"

"Hooray fer yuh, 'Big Boy!'"

"Yuh can do it, Oscar!"

The giant, who had stopped to brush himself off, glanced up at the grand stands and glowered, darkly.

"My name ain't Oscar!" he protested.

"No," cried Eddie Owens, hot footing it up, "but yuhr name would have been mud ef yuh wasn't just lucky!"

"Lucky—heck!" cried the giant, staring hard at Eddie, and at Joe and Red and a handful of other officials who had arrived. "Lucky! Why, that steer was sure some tough nut—but I been practicing dodging fer three weeks back on th' Bar O Bee Rancho——"

"Dodgin'?" echoed Eddie in amazement. "Why, blame it, what do yuh mean——"

"Dodgin' is what I means!" said the cowboy, "bull dodgin'—yuh have it on the prize-list announcement yuh sent to the rancho——"

He pulled out a tattered handbill, smoothed it out and put a big finger on event No. 7.

"Thar," he said tersely, "bull dodgin'!"

Eddie's eyes fairly popped from their sockets.

There, in black type, sure enough, was the announcement:

EVENT No. 7. BULL DODGING.

Eddie gulped, and his face flushed.

"That printer!" he exclaimed. "That ass! That locoed coyote! He put a 'd' whar a 'g' should of been! He made it d-o-D-g-i-n-g instead o' d-o-G-g-i-n-g as it should have been an' nobody noticed it—blamed fool——"

"Lissen to that crowd cheerin'," said Joe Myers significantly. "I reckon they figger Big Boy here, should git the prize—an' ef he don't—I reckon the committee had better start runnin' right now, because——"

Eddie cocked one ear for just a moment.

"Prize?" cried Eddie, and his face lit up with keen understanding. "Waal, I guess yes—o' course he gits the prize! He was the only one here that did any real bull dodgin'—an' Joe, yuh explain to the crowd that Big Boy here was the only one who actually qualified in the bull dodgin' event—the others—er—waal—misunderstood and thought it was just bulldoggin'. Yuh explain, Joe, that the dodgin' event listed on the program is—er—waal it is—a—a brand-new one!"

"Whoopee!" sang out Joe, raising his megaphone.

"Whoopee!" echoed the crowd, ten seconds later, after Joe had told them that their favorite had won the bull-dodging championship of Slat's first rodeo!

PRESERVE REDWOOD GROVES ALONG HIGHWAY

ACCORDING to plans now under way by the Save-the-Redwoods League and other organizations, the various belts of redwoods contiguous to the Redwood Highway along the Pacific coast between Oregon and California will be purchased and preserved for all time. One of the recent acquisitions of redwood tracts is that known as the Henry S. Graves Grove, comprising one hundred and fifty-seven acres of redwoods fronting the ocean ten miles south of Crescent City, in Del Norte County. It is traversed by the highway and is easily accessible by car from Crescent City. This is one of the finest tracts so far secured along this highway, both as regards the height and the unusual symmetry of the trees. An accompanying growth of Douglas fir, tanbark, oaks and rhododendron, with a dense covering of ferns of many varieties around the base, adds greatly to the attractiveness of the scene.

The Henry S. Graves Grove was purchased through donations from George F. Schwartz, of New York. By the contributions of members of the Save-the-Redwoods League and others interested in the preservation of these splendid trees, it is hoped to purchase a sufficient number of groves to insure a continuous chain in a unified park system which will insure permanently the beauty of the Redwood Highway, one of the finest scenic drives in the country. At present much of this forest land is owned by private lumber interests, and will have to be purchased from them.

"Lone-hand" Larrigan

by
Joseph B. Ames

Author of "Fargo," etc.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

A MESSAGE from his trusted man, "Shorty" McCabe, at the line camp of the Rafter M Ranch of which he, Brand Larrigan, is head, causes Brand to ride out to the line camp. He does not find Shorty there, and falls asleep while waiting for him. His well-known black horse is missing in the morning. Suspecting that Matt Bowker, strayman for Morgan Apgar's ranch, the Bar V, delivered a false message, he rides back to the latter ranch. He only finds Maude Apgar, who is supposed to be his sweetheart, and Phyllis Marden there.

When he reaches his own ranch, he is relieved to find no cattle missing, as he feared the ruse to get him away was committed by rustlers. He does discover the note and some of his clothing missing. Just as he is conferring with his trusted foreman, Bale Rutherford, his suspicions of Rait Wilson and Red Daggett, the latter having suddenly left his employ, he is interrupted by Phyllis dashing madly up on her black thoroughbred.

She tells him that the stage had been held up early that morning, that a Jud Logan had been killed, and a posse is out after Brand, since a rider wearing his clothes and riding his horse had been identified as one of the outlaws.

Brand gets away on Phyllis' horse. Reaching the line camp, he finds Shorty McCabe dead on the floor, with a few clews as to where he had been killed. Just as Brand is about to leave, he is covered by two members of the posse who have come up silently.

CHAPTER VIII.

GUN PLAY.

THROUGHOUT Warren County, Brand Larrigan's astonishing swiftness with a six-gun was a matter of notoriety. Sheriff Stoll himself, at a rodeo the year before in Red Butte, had jokingly remarked that if ever he had occasion to "get" the youthful owner of the Rafter M he would feel inclined to shoot first and do his talking afterward. With brain and muscles perfectly attuned, Larrigan was one of those rare and enviable persons who shoot almost entirely by instinct from any position, aptly demonstrating the truth of the adage that sometimes the hand is swifter than the eye.

The present instance was distinctly a case in point. The moment he glimpsed those shadowy figures, Larrigan's hand swept to his thigh. The last word of the command was being uttered when, simultaneously, his thumb pressed the flash-light switch, sending a flood of blinding light into the eyes of his opponents, his finger dragged on the trigger of the Colt. Shooting through the end of his holster, he drilled one man in the shoulder, flung himself agilely to one side, and placed another bullet accurately into the thigh of the other.

The answering shots naturally went

wild, though one bullet struck a log just above Brand's head, showering him with bits of bark. Like a flash he plunged forward, leaped over the prostrate body of the second man, swept past the other, who had swayed back against the wall, and vanished into the darkness.

As he sped around the corner of the corral and on toward where he had left the black, a dancing devil lurked in his gray eyes, his lips curved briefly in a grim smile. He had won the first skirmish, for neither of the wounded men was able to follow him, and it would take at least five minutes for the main body of the posse to reach the cabin. Moreover, Shearman, the man he had drilled through the shoulder, was a close friend of Rait Wilson, and by this time Brand had grown exceedingly distrustful of that person's intimates.

"Ed's not so dumb, after all, sendin' 'em ahead quietly," he reflected. "They must have left their cayuses some ways off an' sneaked up on foot."

Reaching the black, he hastily loosened the reins, mounted, and, crossing the creek, urged the thoroughbred into that long, swinging stride which would outdistance, he knew, any of the horses likely to pursue him. He wasted few regrets on the complications inevitable with the coming of the posse. They would, of course, remove McCabe's body, conveying it probably to the Rafter M, where "Shorty" had belonged. Whether the red smudge on the murdered man's shirt and that withered, yellow sprig would remain intact and unnoticed was a chance. At any rate, Rutherford must be given the facts without delay, so that, if necessary, he could meet the posse and draw public attention to the evidence. As he rode, another plan developed in Larrigan's mind.

It was well after eleven when he came in sight of the ranch house. Approaching from the rear, he noticed that a light was burning in his bedroom, though the remainder of the house was in darkness. Leaving the mare behind the harness shed, he moved softly forward until he could see through the open window.

The lamp stood on his desk. It was with a feeling of satisfaction that Larrigan observed Rutherford dozing beside it, a newspaper across his knees. In the haste of his departure Brand had forgotten that a light in an empty room is more than likely to arouse suspicion. Evidently that point had not escaped the astute Bale. Making sure that the door leading into the living room was closed, Larrigan stepped close to the window, and with a gentle hiss aroused the foreman.

"Kind of thought you might show up again to-night," the latter commented in a low tone when he had crossed the room. "You hadn't been gone half an hour before Draper an' most o' the bunch started a-boilin' for the line camp."

"How many did they leave here?"

"Three. They're beddin' down at the bunk house safe enough, seein' as nobody expected you'd double back here so soon. Ed just left 'em as a kind of precaution."

"Good," approved Larrigan. "Listen, Bale."

He spoke rapidly in a low tone, and as Rutherford listened, his lean, sharp-cut face grew hard and vengeful. Beyond a lurid, muttered comment or two he listened in silence until Brand had finished. Then he nodded.

"I get you," he said briefly. "That red clay's likely to stick even if the sprig happens to get brushed off. But lookit; ain't they likely to take Shorty to town? There'll be an inquest, I reckon."

"It's about fifty-fifty," admitted Larrigan. "If they bring him here it'll be up to you to look for the smudge an' that bit o' vine an' draw attention to 'em. Nobody but a nitwit would believe I downed a man out on the range an' then

took the trouble to lug the body back to the cabin. It's got to be done the minute they show up, too, before somebody else takes notice an' quietly gets rid o' the evidence. Draper an' the rest ain't any fools, an' it wouldn't surprise me none if two or three o' that gang o' thugs might be along with the posse."

"Like enough," agreed Rutherford. "What if they don't come here, though?"

"I'll look after that," said Larrigan quietly. "After I leave here I'm goin' to have a little talk with Judge Greer."

"You're goin' to Shelby?" questioned Bale dubiously. "Ain't that takin' a lot o' chances?"

"Not many. Most o' the folks are a-bed by now, or off with the posse. The way the judges' place lies, I can slip in from the back an' be off again without anybody bein' the wiser."

Still Rutherford did not appear entirely convinced. "Seein' as there's a warrant out for you he might think it was his duty to—er—hold you," he commented.

Larrigan grinned. "Not him. At least after I've told him the how of things. He's got sense, the judge has, an' he's straight—besides bein' a friend o' the family. O' course, if he should happen to get pernickety——" He paused briefly, hand sliding down to the weapon at his side. "But he won't," he concluded with conviction. "Lookit, Bale; did you ever see this before?"

Drawing the broken knife from his pocket, Brand passed it to the foreman, who examined it closely and then shook his head.

"Not me. I'd remember it, too, I expect, if I ever had. Most fellahs would buy a new one instead o' goin' to the trouble o' grindin' down that blade. Musta belonged to some tightwad. That the one you found at the line camp?"

Larrigan nodded. "It ain't Shorty's, then?"

"Last time Shorty was in town he bought him a new one 'count o' losin' the other out on the range. He was kinda peevish because the one he lost was pretty near new itself, he told me. The piece o' bone's been broken off that there one some time, I'd say."

"Looks so to me," agreed Brand, dropping the knife back into his pocket. "Well, I better be driftin' if I'm goin' to see the judge before Draper an' his crowd hit town. Say, Bale, where'd Daggett go?"

"Red? Why, Shelby; said he was goin' to lay up in town a while before he got him another job. Said he was sorta tired o' workin' an' wanted a rest."

"He told you that?" questioned Larrigan thoughtfully.

"Yeah, an' a lot more. For a guy who most gen'ally goes around with his mouth like a shut trap, he seemed almighty talkative. Except his breath didn't smell none o' licker, I'd of said he'd had a slug or two o' 'red eye.'"

"Or else was talkin' to put us off the track," observed Brand. "It wouldn't surprise me none if he never went near Shelby. Why would he, if it was him sneaked the clothes outa my room? O' course, he expected I'd be dancin' a strangulation jig by now, but Red never was the kind to take chances. I'll bet he's sloped off some'ers where he'll stick until he's dead sure how the cat has jumped. Lookit, Bale; did Draper's crowd make any trouble for Phil? I've been wonderin' about that."

Rutherford's face darkened. "Some of 'em tried to, when they found you'd rid off on her horse—'Spike' Shearman, 'specially. I hadda shut him up two or three times. Too bad you didn't drill him a little further down. Ed was pretty decent, though, after I made out you up an' grabbed the black when you heard the posse comin'. That girl's pure quill," he added appreciatively. "Why, if I hadn't kep' her quiet she'd up an' spilled the whole thing about her

comin' a-purpose to warn you an' all, with a large, generous piece of her mind thrown in. Like enough they'd of took her up as accessory to the fact, or somethin'. She's one dandy kid, Phil is, believe me!"

"You said it!" agreed Brand emphatically. He straightened from where he had been leaning against the window casing. "There's a couple of things you can do while I'm gone. Keep that saddle careful an' find out anythin' you can about it. Likewise I wanta know the name o' the fellah in the stake who shot Cinders. That oughta be easy enough. He was planted there to turn that particular trick, an' I'd like to get a line on him. I ain't sure when I'll see you again. This light business is sort of conspicuous, so you'd better drop it an' bed down in here while I'm away. Then any time I should happen to slip in at night, I'll know where to lay my hands on you. So long, fellah."

Rutherford replied briefly, and with a casual wave of his hand Larrigan moved away from the window and vanished in the darkness.

CHAPTER IX.

A MIDNIGHT INTERVIEW.

SOMETHING over an hour later Judge Greer, reposing comfortably in his snuggery at the back of the house, was apprised of the presence of a belated caller by the noiseless appearance at the open window of the head and shoulders of Brand Larrigan.

"'Lo, judge," greeted the newcomer, regarding the official with an engaging grin. "Too late for a little chin?"

The judge exhibited no surprise at the presence of this young man who had been much in his thoughts during the afternoon and evening, but who was quite the last person he expected to see in Shelby. He merely laid aside the volume he had been reading—a love story of lurid title and saccharine sweetness of diction which was the type he invariably chose as a relaxation for the legal mind—and lowered his stockinged feet from the chair placed directly before him.

"Not at all," he returned composedly. "Step in."

Larrigan complied without delay, swinging his long, lithe figure across the window sill. His first act was to lower the sash and pull down the blind.

"It may be a mite close," he murmured apologetically, "but I ain't exactly pinin' for publicity right now."

"Quite so," agreed the judge, with dry understanding. "Help yourself to a chair."

A bottle and an empty glass faintly and fragrantly reminiscent of old Bourbon stood on the table at his elbow. Elevating his portly figure from the arm chair, Judge Greer produced a clean tumbler from a convenient cupboard and placed it before Larrigan, who had drawn up a chair and dropped down into it with a sigh of satisfaction.

"I was thinkin' o' that particular brand as I come along," he observed, reaching for the bottle. "I dunno where in thunder you find such licker nowadays."

The judge coughed gently. "There are—er—ways," he commented, a faint twinkle in his keen eyes.

"I expect," grinned Larrigan. "Well, here's how."

With evidence of appreciation he drank a portion of the three fingers he had poured out, and then bent forward, resting both elbows on the table.

"You've heard about this business, o' course," he remarked.

"Naturally," returned the judge. "I signed the warrant for your arrest."

"You did?"

The judge nodded. "The evidence admitted of nothing else. As a matter of fact, I don't know when I've seen so much evidence dovetailing so perfectly. In most crimes, you know, it isn't usual

to find every little detail brought out with such complete precision."

"An' here's the criminal walked right into your clutches," observed Larrigan. "Mebbe you feel like makin' the arrest."

Judge Greer pursed his lips. "Not—exactly," he rejoined in his slow, smooth drawl. "In my official capacity I might feel it my duty to act. Just now I am merely a private individual consumed by a burning curiosity. I can see how that black of yours might have been stolen, but how on earth, young man, did the gang ever get hold of your clothes and saddle, and manage to keep you out of the way while the hold-up was being staged?"

Brand gave a suppressed chuckle and drained his glass. "I told Bale you was gifted with horse sense," he observed, as he returned the judge's steady, inquiring glance. "Maybe I was dumb," he went on, his face growing keen and serious. "But it's a whole heap easier to pull this wise stuff after a thing's over than before, when there ain't even a smidgin' o' suspicion in your mind there's anything crooked in the wind. Listen."

Briefly and succinctly he poured into the official ears an account of his experiences up to the moment when he had been forced to fly from Ed Draper's posse. He told of his suspicion of Rait Wilson and of his belief that Red Daggett had overheard and betrayed the talk on the subject between himself and Rutherford, explained the stealing of his horse and saddle from the line camp, and the vanishing of his clothes and the forged note from his bedroom. When he had finished, the judge, who had listened with absorbed attention, drew a long breath and reached for the bottle.

"All circumstantial," he observed, pouring a modest drink, "but it hangs together and furnishes a motive to put you out of business. Of course, no man in his right senses would expose himself at a hold-up that way, but few people can see beyond the end of their noses. It's clever—a whole lot cleverer, in my opinion, than anything Rait Wilson could think up and put across. There's somebody back of him or I'm very much mistaken."

"You ain't heard the whole of it yet," put in Larrigan. "When I struck the line camp to-night just after dark——

"What do you think o' that?" he concluded when he had narrated the circumstances surrounding his discovery of McCabe's body.

"Hum!" muttered the judge, highly intrigued. "There *is* somebody back of Wilson. I wonder, now—— But that's not important at the moment. Draper ought to be back within an hour, and I expect he'll come straight on to town with the body. I'll make a point of being on hand to welcome him." He paused, eyes sparkling, a faint flush tinging his plump, handsome face. "What you need is some clear, straightforward evidence," he went on. "Wilson could supply it, no doubt, or possibly Daggett. If there was only some way they could be induced——"

"That's my idea," interrupted Larrigan. "I'm goin' to hunt up Daggett first an'——"

"Wait!" The judge suddenly lifted a plump, well-cared-for hand. "I'd rather you didn't tell me, Brand. There are some things it's just as well for an official not to know. Between ourselves, and speaking entirely as a private individual, it strikes me that it would be better to tackle Daggett first, and if you can—er—persuade him to shed a little light on the subject you could then—a—interest yourself in the others. He strikes me as the sort of person who would be tolerably easy to—influence."

"He ain't got nerve to pick a fuss with a pack rat," declared Larrigan. "Only trouble is, it'll likely take time to locate him. He told Bale he was goin' to lay up a while in Shelby, but——"

"You might try Wayne," suggested the judge in an impersonal drawl.

"Wayne!"

Judge Greer drained his glass and set it down on the table. "Late this afternoon, while entering the Broken Dollar," he ruminated, "I overheard a word or two—— But I expect I'd better not go further. I only suggest that a trip to Wayne might be—er—profitable."

Brand's eyes glinted. "I expect it would," he rejoined briefly. "Much obliged."

"Don't thank me," said the judge, reaching for his shoes. "I've really told you nothing. We'll call it just a notion of mine." He pulled on one shoe and began lacing it up. "I don't like to seem inhospitable," he remarked, "but wouldn't it be just as well for you to be on your way? Draper's likely to turn up any time, and it might cause misconceptions if you were found here." His keen, twinkling eyes met Brand's. "I'll be interested to know how you make out. If it's convenient, you might drop in some night and let me know. Only don't take any chances. There's one more thing before you go," he concluded as they both arose. "Keep within the law, son—if you can. Of course, tonight you had to wing Shearman and Butler; they threw down on you first. But that isn't going to soothe the angry passions of their friends, and already you've got Logan's crowd sizzling. There's nothing ever gained by stirring up a lot of people, so take the advice of an old friend and don't use unnecessary violence."

Larrigan grinned as he shook the proffered hand. "I won't, judge," he answered. "Don't worry none about that. I'll be as careful as a rabbit with a hound dawg nosin' round her burrow."

There was a faint touch of skepticism in Judge Greer's answering smile. He had known the younger man from boyhood and was exceedingly fond of this son of his oldest friend. Yet among a number of admirable qualities Brand possessed, personal caution had not always been conspicuous. Being wise in his generation, however, the judge refrained from further advice.

"You might begin by getting your cayuse out of my back yard without drawing the attention of the neighbors," he suggested dryly. "Having lived a tolerably blameless life, I'm not anxious to start a town scandal at this late day.

"I'll do that little thing with pleasure," smiled Larrigan. "Much obliged, judge, an' good-by."

He departed noiselessly through the window, as he had come. For a space the judge stood motionless beside the table, his face thoughtful.

"He'll go over to the Gridiron and change horses," he cogitated. "Then he'll head straight for Wayne. Well, after all, I suppose I'd have done the same thing at his age, and the boy's got a head on his shoulders." He gave a dry chuckle. "I'm just a little glad I'm not in this Daggett person's shoes," he murmured.

CHAPTER X.

LARRIGAN STRIKES.

THE town of Wayne stood at a bend in the Elk River, where that shallow stream curved around a wooded spur thrust out from the line of hills that backed the settlement. Some forty miles from Shelby, and separated from it by a considerable stretch of rough, hilly country, it seemed somehow even more remote. There was, indeed, comparatively little commerce between the two places. Shelby took care of the outfits and little settlements to the north, while Wayne drew its trade and patronage chiefly from the occupants of the widespread Yampa Basin, which extended southeastward from the hills almost as far as Red Butte, the county seat.

Wayne was reputed to be a rather hard town, though just why it was would be rather difficult to state. There were the usual saloons, dance halls, and gam-

bling places, ranged along its wide main street, mingled with two stores, a ramshackle hotel, and several other commercial structures. The saloons were always well patronized, and often the play ran high; yet there had never been a suspicion of crookedness in the various games of chance conducted in the several joints. Indeed, Harvey Gaul, owner of the largest and most resplendent of these—modestly termed The Palace—was reputed to be square and aboveboard in all his dealings.

For all this, things seemed to happen in Wayne with unusual frequency. Quarrels and resulting shooting were unusually common; the life of the coroner was no bed of ease. Even Sheriff Stoll had been heard to vexatiously remark that if Wayne could only be moved into the adjacent county, he might be able to ease up and take a rest now and then.

Whether the neighboring punchers who thronged the place in the afternoon or evening, or the citizens, themselves, were responsible for this reputation, was difficult to decide. At all events, it had become the habit of visitors to go warily, with guns loose in their holsters, and when sitting down to a game of draw, they much preferred to place their backs against a wall. Yet most of the time there lay over the place an atmosphere of humdrum peacefulness that was positively somnolent.

Early on a particular afternoon this seemed especially the case. Blazing in the heat, the wide main street looked actually deserted. The only visible signs of life were a mongrel curled up in the shade of the eating house, the snoring proprietor of the Red Parrot sprawled in a chair tilted against the front of his store, and the languidly switching tails of several horses tied to the hitching rack before Harvey Gaul's saloon and gambling place.

Within that palace of alcohol and chance, life appeared to be also at a low ebb. Behind an ornate bar of polished wood and glittering brass, the solitary attendant seemed to have gone into a trance. Now and again his sleepy glance wandered uninterestedly toward the trio hunched around a table well down the long room, but since he was well acquainted with them all, and their voices were too low pitched to reach his ears, he derived no pleasure from the cursory inspection. Occasionally he eyed briefly with that same air of supreme boredom a fourth individual at an even more remote table, face buried in outflung arms, from whom came sounds which inevitably proclaimed that he was sleeping off a drunk. Frequently he yawned. For the most part he remained motionless, propped against an ornamental pilaster separating two costly mirrors which backed the bar, eyes glazed, staring at nothing as if even his mind had ceased to function.

The three gathered about the card table seemed somewhat more alive. One of them—lean, dark, saturnine—mechanically ruffled a deck of cards the while he spoke in low tones or listened to the other two. Of the latter, the stout, round-faced individual with a florid complexion and glistening, bald head, had little to say. He seemed content to listen, with only an occasional nod or brief interjection, to the conversation of the dark man and the third member of the little party, whose carroty hair wanted cutting, and whose small, sharp, pale-blue eyes were inadequately separated by a long and melancholy nose.

"What did he go back to that line camp for?" asked the dark man, Vogel by name.

"You got me," returned Red Daggett, late of the Rafter M, sweeping the back of one hand across his moist forehead. It was hot even here, and the loud buzzing of flies against a near-by window seemed to annoy him. His slightly uneasy glance sought the open door

through which the sun streamed brilliantly, casting a dazzling oblong upon the floor, then returned to Vogel. "When he got away from Draper the first time I'd of said he'd have beat it fast an' far."

"Yeah," agreed Vogel briefly, long, slim fingers mechanically shuffling the cards. "Darn that blasted idjit! Think o' his letting Larrigan slip through his fingers twice. I'd give somethin' to know where he's headin' for now."

Daggett made a movement with his shoulders, but did not speak. He had taken out tobacco sack and papers, and had begun the slow construction of a cigarette.

"Sam didn't hear nothin' about him in town?" queried stout "Pudge" Bullett ponderously.

Vogel shook his head. "Nope. An' the fellahs Ed left at the Rafter M said he hadn't shown up there that they know of. Alla same, I'll bet he sneaked in there to get him another hoss an' a change o' clothes. He went off on that black thoroughbred belongin' to the Marden girl an' accordin' to all accounts was dolled up like he most gen'ally is—a whole lot too conspicuous, believe me, for a branded outlaw who's got practically the whole county on his trail. Why, he'll be a fool if he doesn't——"

He paused, struck by the extraordinary transformation which had suddenly come over the man upon his left. Daggett's face had abruptly turned the color of a dead fish. His eyes, wide, staring, filled with a sort of dazed horror, were fixed on something at the other end of the room. From the crumpled paper tube crushed between his fingers tobacco dripped unheeded. Vogel stared at him for a second in astonishment, and then swiftly followed the direction of his gaze.

By the door, a shadow partly blotted out the square of brilliant sunshine, and lounging in the doorway was the figure of a man. Tall, lean, and broad of shoulder, the immaculate whiteness of his shirt stood out in strong contrast to the darker open vest. Silver conchas glinted on his chaps of soft, fine leather; a loosely knotted neckerchief of crimson silk circled the bronzed throat. Vogel paid small heed to the details of this familiar costume. His startled gaze was met and held by the eyes which regarded him from beneath the wide brim of the white Stetson. Gray eyes they were, keen and clear and slightly mocking. In spite of the indolently drooping lids, Max Vogel was conscious of an unpleasant premonitory tingle on his spine.

"L-l-Larrigan!" stammered Daggett in a queer, throaty voice.

The newcomer's glance shifted slightly, though to Vogel it seemed to still embrace all three of them in its steady, fixed regard.

"'Lo, Red," drawled the outlaw. "Thought mebbe I'd find you here."

He carried but one weapon, and had not drawn it, though his right thumb was hooked loosely in his chap belt. Daggett made no answer. His face had grown if possible a shade paler than before.

"I'd like a word or two with you, Red," said Larrigan. "An' since it's sorta public here, mebbe you won't mind steppin' down the street—— Keep your hands on the table, Vogel. You, too, Bullett. I like 'em better that way. Now, Red, what say to a little ramble down the street, where we can talk private?"

Daggett's face was ghastly. The while his fingers clutched the table edge with a spasmodic, protesting grip, his frightened, appealing glance swept from one to the other of his two companions, returning as if fascinated to Larrigan.

"I—I—— You——" he gasped out.

"Move!"

There was a whiplike, menacing snap to the word which seemed to lift Daggett bodily to his feet. Swaying a lit-

tle, he caught the back of his chair to steady himself.

"Just take their guns an' break 'em, an' bring 'em along with you," directed Larrigan in that same cool, drawling voice.

Bullett obeyed without question. Almost eagerly, indeed, he dragged his weapon forth and flung it on the table. Vogel hesitated an instant, his dark, set face like an evil mask. Then he gave a resigned shrug and his hand moved languidly toward his holster.

What followed came so swiftly that not even the bartender, tensely upright against the mahogany pilaster; breathlessly, tinglingly alive to every little move in the unexpected drama, was able to separate one lightning movement from another. He saw Vogel's hand flash up from below the table edge, his weapon spitting fire. The report seemed to mingle with another; but it was only when a little shower of plaster came from the ceiling and Vogel sank back in his chair, clutching a shattered wrist, that Jim Felsen understood. He dared not stir, but his glance—full of wonder and grudging appreciation—slanted sidewise toward the man still lounging easily in the doorway, his hand gripping the butt of the six-shooter he had not drawn.

"You shouldn't be so impulsive, Vogel," drawled Larrigan. "Little speed, Red."

Daggett fumbled for Bullett's gun and broke it, sending a little shower of shells clattering on the table. Retrieving Vogel's weapon from the floor, he likewise emptied the cylinder. As he crossed the room toward Larrigan, his feet dragged; once or twice he stumbled.

"Lay 'em on the bar," directed Brand. "Your own, too." His glance shifted to the attendant. "Let's have a piece o' cord," he requested briefly; "an' don't go reachin' for no six-gun while you're gettin' it.'

After what he had just witnessed, such a move was the last thing in the world Felsen had in mind to do. With unwonted alacrity he sprang for an open shelf behind the bar, and though in reaching for some stout cord one hand actually touched a loaded Colt lying there, the thought of turning it on this astonishing intruder did not once occur to him. It was only at Larrigan's suggestion that he produced the weapon and added it to the other three, stringing them all together by the trigger guards with obliging speed.

"If I was you fellahs, I'd stay put for a little while," commented Larrigan as he took the string of weapons. "Come ahead, Red."

Followed by the reluctant Daggett, who looked like a man going to his doom, he stepped into the street, his glance sweeping swiftly to right and left.

Shattered by those twin shots, the atmosphere of placid calm which had enfolded Wayne a little while before, had vanished. Heads were thrust out of windows; here and there men looked questioningly out of doorways. From the direction of the United States Hotel a group of five or six men were moving swiftly toward the Palace; at the sight of that dashing figure with the scarlet neckerchief and white Stetson, they paused abruptly in front of the Red Parrot, appearing to interest themselves in the contents of the dingy show window.

Even then Larrigan appeared unhurried. Apparently oblivious of the stir, he approached the splendid black stallion who stood with trailing reins at one end of the hitching rack, and slung the bunch of empty six-guns over the saddle horns.

"Get your cayuse," he told Daggett briefly.

With shaking hands the latter untied the bridle of a piebald roan and slowly mounted. His frightened glance swept the street, resting for a moment on the group of men down by the store. For an instant it seemed as if he meditated flight. Larrigan, who had already

swung into the hand-carved, silver-trimmed saddle and gathered up his reins, was anticipating such a movement.

"This way," he directed his companion curtly. "We're goin' to ride out toward The Hogback."

Dominated by the power of personality, Daggett meekly turned his horse and rode westward with Larrigan beside him. It was that same power of personality, coupled with Brand's unhurried coolness which kept the onlookers from interfering. The least sign of haste or flurry would probably have started guns to popping. To every outward seeming the two men were setting forth in perfect amity. Their presence together puzzled the group beside the store, most of whom were unaware of the latest turn of events in Shelby. They had recognized Brand Larrigan instantly, but were quite unable to figure out what he was doing here in Wayne in the company of Red Daggett. So, between doubt, perplexity, and ignorance, they held their hands while the two men rode on up the street, passed the last house, and presently disappeared behind a rocky buttress around which wound the steep trail leading up into the mountains.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MOVING POWER OF TERROR.

FOR a space as they rode along, knee to knee, Larrigan, with deliberate calculation, remained silent. He could see that already Daggett, at no time noted for physical courage, was in a blue funk. He guessed that by prolonging the uncertainty, the man's fear of the unknown would render him even more pliable. It was not until the trail had made another turn and entered a gully beyond which lay the sharp ridge of rock known locally as The Hogback that he suddenly spoke.

"Well, come across."

Daggett started, flashed a frightened glance at him, and swiftly turned his head away.

"Wa—wa—what do you mean?" he evaded unsteadily.

"You know well enough what I mean. Who put you up to stealin' them clothes o' mine, an' where'd they go to?"

The man's lips twitched and he moved unsteadily in his saddle.

"I—I didn't take 'em,' he denied weakly. "I didn't have nothin' to do with—with——"

"You're lyin'," cut in Larrigan sharply. "You can't run a whizzer on me, you poor galoot. After you got your time, you sneaked back to the outfit the night I was away an' got into my room through the window. You swiped a note that was lyin' on the bureau an' a complete outfit. Who'd you take 'em to? Who wore my clothes at that hold-up? Spill it, quick, or——"

He paused significantly. Pale, shaking, his none too strong nerves jangling out of tune, Daggett caught his breath and promptly gulped out a single name:

"Schaeffer."

Brand stared. "Nate Schaeffer? That fellow who pals with Rait Wilson?"

Daggett nodded miserably, and as Larrigan glanced sharply at him, he felt that the fellow was telling the truth. None but a genius could counterfeit that expression of mingled wretchedness, reluctance, and dominating terror. Daggett was no genius. During his moderately brief stay at the Rafter M, Brand had sized him up as sly, slinking, unreliable; the sort who would pull a dirty trick provided the odds were all in favor of his getting away with it, but under no circumstances inclined to take chances. The only reason he had kept him on was because Daggett knew his job, and, having fathomed his character, Larrigan felt him to be harmless. More than once during the past forty-eight hours, he had experienced a vague wonder as to the quality of persuasion which

must have been exerted to induce this craven to carry through his share in the conspiracy.

Nate Schaeffer! Brand was conscious of a momentary sense of chagrin at his failure to consider this fellow, who for more than a year had occupied a deserted nester's shack on the trail midway between Wayne and Shelby. While there was no facial resemblance between them, in height and build they were practically counterparts. Dressed in Larrigan's clothes, with a mask or slit bandanna across his face, and riding one of Larrigan's famous blacks, it would be surprising if he failed entirely to deceive a stageful of frightened passengers.

"Most anybody'd be took in by it," Larrigan reflected as they left the gulch and approached The Hogback.

Like the spine of some antediluvian monster, this narrow ridge of rock cut laterally across a cañon of unusual depth and ruggedness, dividing it into two sections. With care and precaution it was not difficult to traverse the narrow, almost razorlike edge on horseback, though more prudent riders preferred, even at the sacrifice of three miles or more, to follow the regular trail which turned sharply northward at this point and then crossed the cañon farther along.

Larrigan, however, had no such intention. He knew that sooner or later they would be followed. With perfect confidence in his horse and himself, it would be folly to give his pursuers this marked advantage. He was still considering with interest certain features of Daggett's revelation when they reached the point of divergence, and his companion started to rein the roan around the sharp bend in the trail.

"Straight ahead," directed Brand curtly.

"You ain't goin' across there!" protested Daggett.

"I sure am," stated Larrigan crisply. "Move! I'm followin' you right behind."

White to the ears, but evidently aware that protest was of no avail, Daggett guided his horse slowly over the short interval of level ground and started across the ridge with gingerly reluctance. Lips curling a little, Brand followed him, oblivious to the sheer depths on either side. With a sure-footed horse, the danger was trifling; evidently Daggett did not so regard it. His gaze was apprehensive; his muscles tense; perspiration glistened on his forehead and behind his ears. It would be quite useless, Brand knew, to question him further until the farther side was reached. So, having rolled and lighted a cigarette, he resigned himself to the inevitable.

"You ain't got much nerve, an' that's a fact," he said scornfully, when the way broadened, and he reined the black alongside his prisoner. "So Nate Schaeffer wore them clothes, did he? Who put him up to it?"

"Put him up to it!" quavered Daggett. "Wa—what d'you mean by that? He—he thought it out himself, o' course."

"Yes, he did!" retorted Larrigan impatiently. "You know as well as I do that Nate Schaeffer ain't got brains enough to think up a thing like that. There's somebody else back of him, an' you might as well spill it out first as last. You'll have to in the end, you know," he added significantly.

Afterward Brand wished he might have interpreted that look on Daggett's face more accurately. At the moment it seemed as if his wide-eyed terror, the twitching lip, the spasmodic clenching of one hand over the saddle horn, were caused by the feeling that Larrigan was evidently determined to penetrate his ultimate secret. Whatever the reason for his fright, it seemed suddenly to rouse in him a despairing flicker of defiance like the hopeless snarl of a fox

backed into some corner by a pack of hounds.

"Lookit!" he cried, his voice quivering. "Where you takin' me, an' what you gonna do?"

Larrigan's lips curled briefly in a not altogether pleasant smile. "Supposin' you was in my place," he countered. "What would you be likely to do under the circumstances—huh?"

His voice, though low and drawling, held a threatening undercurrent which was neither agreeable nor reassuring. It was there of deliberate intention, for he had grown weary of the evasiveness of this craven and meant to stand no further nonsense.

Unfortunately he had not calculated on the effect the strain of the past half hour and more might have upon a person of Daggett's temperament. A coward morally as well as physically, with no great mental capacity and at the bottom of it all a distinct consciousness of guilty, each passing minute added to his nervous tension. Into Larrigan's every word and move and shifting expression, he read a score of threatening, direful possibilities until at length his self-control abruptly snapped like a rope when the strain becomes too great.

For a long moment he stared at Brand, eyes wild, face livid. Then, without warning and with that amazing swiftness lent sometimes by despair, he snatched a pistol from a hidden holster beneath his left arm and fired point-blank at Larrigan.

Such, at least, was his intention. As his finger pressed the trigger, a bullet from Brand's six-gun struck the weapon, tearing it irresistibly from his grasp, numbing his hand and arm, destroying in a flash the last shreds of reason that had remained to him. With a guttural cry he whirled his horse, dug spurs into the roan's flanks, and, bending low in the saddle, vanished around a clump of firs straight in the direction of The Hogback.

Larrigan could easily have brought him down, but it was no part of his plan to kill or even maim the man. With a shout he spurred the black forward, sending a warning shot after the flying Daggett—a shot purposely aimed high. Then, rounding the firs, he caught his breath and dragged the stallion to a sudden halt to stare dumbly at the swift, unexpected catastrophe he was powerless to avert.

Instead of slowing down, Daggett was galloping blindly toward The Hogback. At the point where this narrow spine of rock merged into the wider, sloping stretch, a little ledge—almost like a low parapet—edged the margin of the abyss. The roan, sensing its peril, snorted and dragged back on the reins. There was a momentary struggle between the man and horse. Suddenly the latter swerved abruptly to one side, its hoofs struck against the low, rocky ledge, and with a supreme muscular effort the animal came to an abrupt halt.

The sudden, forceful impact flung Daggett clear of the saddle. His body grazed the little ledge of rock and pitched forward out of sight. From the cañon depths came a single wild shriek which brought a momentary tingle on Brand's spine. After that—silence.

Larrigan's gaze fixed mechanically on the roan, who had backed away from the brink and stood panting. "I've heard o' people bein' scared to death, but I never thought to——"

The words clipped off abruptly as a sense of movement came to him from across the cañon. Swiftly he turned the black and pelted for the firs. As he whirled into shelter, a bullet clipped a twig above his head, and another buried itself in the trunk of a tree close on his right. Without slackening speed, Larrigan guided the thoroughbred dexterously along the rough, narrow track which merged, half a mile beyond, into the mountain trail.

"Here's where you gotta do some

travelin', you cyclone horse," he murmured. "We've got to make that fork well ahead of 'em so's to keep the crowd guessin' which way we took."

His expression grew vexed and annoyed. "The devil!" he muttered, feeling mechanically for tobacco sack and papers. "I sure did muss that up good an' proper. But who'd ever have thought a man, even Red Daggett, could have been scairt out of his wits like that? An' me figgerin' that inside o' sixty seconds he'd be ready to spill the name o' the guy who supplies that gang with brains!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE GIRL AND THE JUDGE.

"WENT an' drove Daggett deliberate into that cañon over by The Hogback, he did," declared Marshall Draper heatedly. "Gaul says when they clumb down after him Red was mashed to jelly."

"Indeed!" commented Judge Greer composedly. "How did he do it?"

Draper stared. He was tall and heavily built, with a florid complexion and a notably square jaw. His probity had never been questioned, but as much could not be said for his judgment. A man with a jaw like that could scarcely be expected to easily relinquish an idea or a theory that had once obtained lodging in his mind. More than one of Shelby's citizens bitterly likened his mental equipment to that of a certain plodding, sure-footed, but self-opinionated beast of burden.

"How did who do what?" demanded the marshal testily.

The judge delicately sipped the remainder of his liquor and assumed a more comfortable position against the Broken Dollar bar.

"How did Larrigan drive Daggett into this cañon?" he explained, speaking slowly and with a deliberate distinctness which subconsciously irked the marshal. "Did he push him in, or shoot his horse, or what?"

"He run him in like I'm tellin' you," retorted Draper, his jaw squaring. Somehow he never felt wholly at his ease with the more subtle judge. "About half past two, so Gaul says, he holds up the Palace over to Wayne, drills Max Vogel through the wrist, an' pulls out, takin' Daggett along with him."

"By force, I suppose," interjected the judge.

"O' course! How else? You don't reckon he went willin'. Jim Felsen, who was tendin' bar, says Red was scart green. When they got outside, Larrigan made him mount, an' the two rode off toward the mountains."

"And nobody tried to stop them, not even Gaul?" murmured Judge Greer.

"Harvey wasn't there. He'd been over to the Bar 2 an' got back jest after it happened. Findin' nobody'd took hold—some of 'em thinkin' Red went off of his own free will—he whirled in, got a bunch together, an' beat it after them. Jest as they come in sight o' The Hogback they seen Daggett ridin' outa some pines at the far end, an' heard a shot. That roan o' his was actin' up considerable, an' right at the edge o' the cañon she run into a ledge o' rock an' stopped suddenlike, throwin' Red clean over her head."

"Hum!" murmured the judge. "And Larrigan?"

"He was chasin' along right behind, but soon as he saw the bunch from Wayne he nipped back under cover an' beat it. Like enough in shootin' at Daggett, he nicked the roan an' started her runnin' away, an' Red couldn't pull her up in time."

The judge's eyebrows lifted slightly. "She seems to have pulled up in time to save herself," he remarked. "Was she wounded?"

"Gaul didn't say," retorted Draper shortly. "There ain't any doubt in my

mind as to who was responsible. Every darn thing points to it. Deliberate murder, that's what it is. That young hellion's downed two men in cold blood, an' if he don't swing for it, I'll——"

"Aren't you a little previous, Ed?" interrupted the judge smoothly. "Putting aside this last business, it hasn't been proved yet that I've heard of, that he had anything to do with McCabe's taking off."

"Huh!" replied the marshal, snorting. "You mean that stuff about the smudge on his shoulder an' the little piece o' twig. You can't make me believe there's anything in that foolishness."

"I don't mean to try, Ed—I really don't," declared the judge hastily. "I'm only pointing out that the evidence furnished at the inquest by Bale Rutherford and several others that this particular clay and that special growth are to be found only in one spot over two miles from the line camp made it impossible for me to charge Larrigan with the murder. He might have shot McCabe out on the range, but I see no possible reason for his carrying the body back to the cabin. The coroner agrees with me and we are both anxious to hear what Sheriff Stoll has to say. You've had word from him?"

"He'll be here before six," said Draper. "An' believe me," he continued with ponderous sarcasm, "he can see through a millstone a whole lot better than some folks seem to."

Eyes crinkling a little at the corners, Judge Greer's glance rested upon his burly figure as he stalked toward the door and disappeared. For a moment he stood meditating. Then, pulling down his vest, he half turned to make his own departure when a sudden movement at the far end of the room made him hesitate.

Throughout his conversation with Draper, the judge had been interestedly aware of the presence in the background of Rait Wilson and a tall, dark, broad-shouldered individual whose name he did not know, though he had seen him several times in Shelby. Ostensibly they appeared to be merely chatting casually beside a window with occasional recourse to the bottle on the table between them. Their lounging attitudes and air of boredom added to that impression. The judge's keen wits, sharpened by what Larrigan had confided regarding his suspicions of Rait Wilson, made him wonder. He wished he might overhear something of what they were discussing, but though his hearing was acute, the voices of the pair were so low pitched that only an indistinguishable, intermittent murmur penetrated to the judicial ear. Until this moment, that is, when Wilson, rising abruptly from his chair, stared through the window, a sudden surprised interest in his good-looking, rather dissipated face.

"Lookit!" he exclaimed.

Without undue haste, Judge Greer turned back to the bar and requested a cigar. Biting off the end, he lit it leisurely, the while he closely observed the pair by means of a large plate-glass mirror set into the wall behind the bar. He saw the big, square-shouldered fellow rise and stare through the glass, observed the expression of keen interest in the faces of them both, noticed the brief interchange of rapid whispers, and with a sigh regretted that lip reading was not numbered among his accomplishments. Then, noting that the glances of the two shifted as they followed the object of their interest, the judge turned and moved leisurely toward the door. He reached it just as Phyllis Marden, walking her favorite black mare slowly past the Broken Dollar, appeared opposite the portal.

As she caught sight of him, the girl instantly drew rein. "Oh!" she said, her face brightening. "I'm so glad. I was hoping I might run across you somewhere."

She and the judge were old and close

friends. Ever since her childhood he had petted and made much of her; in later years more than ever he found pleasure in her presence. It seemed a little odd, therefore, that his first swift glance was for the horse she rode, and that as he raised his shrewd eyes to her face there was a curious flash of satisfaction and understanding in them. This vanished swiftly, however, as, hat in hand, he moved briskly around the hitching rail.

"You can't be as pleased as I am, my dear Phil," he said as he took her hand. "It's so long since I've set eyes on you, I was beginning to feel deserted."

"Last time I was in town, you were trying a case," she reminded him. "I shouldn't have dared interrupt that." Her face took on something of its previous soberness and she glanced swiftly around. "Are—are you very busy now?" she asked in a low tone.

"Not in the least," he assured her. "Shall we"—divining something of her worry—"go for a little ride?"

"I'd love to!"

He got his horse, a shapely, well-groomed sorrel. Presently the two were riding slowly down the main street. There was little attempt at conversation until they had passed the last house. Then Judge Greer glanced slantwise at the perplexed and troubled face of the girl beside him.

"I see you've got Black Beauty back," he remarked quietly.

Phyllis met his gaze with no pretense at misunderstanding. "Night before last," she explained in a low tone. "I've no idea when, though. I left Cyclone in the corral and his saddle on the rail. In the morning they were both gone, and Black Beauty was back. I wish——"

She paused, her gaze questioning. "You—you'll stop me if I say anything I—I oughtn't?" she queried. "I mean—— Well, you're a judge, and I suppose sometimes you might feel——"

"You may trust me entirely, my dear," Judge Greer assured her, his eye twinkling. "At present I'm merely a private citizen just as I was the other night when Brand dropped in to consult with me."

"He came to see you!" she cried, her eyes brightening.

"Yes, We had quite a talk, and though he didn't say so, he must have gone straight from my back yard to the Gridiron to change the horses."

"I *am* glad—though it was frightfully risky," she murmured. "Only to-day I was wishing you could see and advise him."

The judge cleared his throat. "Between ourselves, my dear, anything of that sort would be considered extremely unethical to say the least. Strictly speaking, I should hold no commerce whatever with a person in his position. But I've known Brand Larrigan almost as long as I've known you, and I trust him implicitly. We had quite a talk, and though I thought it best not to let him tell me much about his plans, I guessed considerable, and was able to give him a trifle of advice."

Phyllis reached out impulsively and squeezed his hand. "You darling!" she exclaimed. "I knew you'd feel that way about it, but it's a comfort to have you say so. I've been so worried—— You—you don't believe this thing they're saying about him now?"

The judge hesitated an instant. "About Daggett, you mean? I'm afraid there's a certain amount of truth in it. Brand left me the other night with the idea of hunting up the fellow and getting some information from him. It was Daggett, you know, he suspected of stealing that outfit out of his room."

"Oh!" cried the girl, her face paling. "But surely you don't think that Brand would——"

"Certainly not!" the judge assured her as she paused. Briefly he outlined the particulars he had gleaned from Draper and one or two others he had talked with

in the saloon before the marshal's arrival. "It looks to me," he concluded, "as if Daggett got panicky, tried to run away, and his horse pitched him into the cañon. The difficulty will be to prove it."

"But weren't there witnesses? These Wayne men——"

"Of a sort," he admitted. "The trouble is most people around here are prejudiced against Larrigan. That whole business was worked out with such surprising cleverness that even some of Brand's friends, though they may not admit it, are doubtful."

"I know," she assented vehemently. "It's hateful. Everybody seems against him. Why, even uncle was furious when he found I'd let him take Black Beauty. He said I'd no business to get mixed up in such a thing; and you know he's always liked Brand. I—I can't understand it. Where—where do you suppose he is now?"

"I haven't a notion," declared the judge. "I should fancy he might be lying low after this business over at Wayne. They lost his trail at that fork in the mountains to the west of town, you know. Of course, no one can predict just what Brand will do. The only thing I'm certain of is that he hasn't the least intention of leaving Warren County, until his name is cleared, and he's squared up with the gang who's responsible for getting him into this mess. It'll be a risky business, but I certainly do admire his grit."

For a moment or two the girl rode on in silence, her face troubled and uncertain. "He—he's quite wonderful," she said presently in a low tone almost as if she were talking to herself. She turned and glanced at her companion. The expression he surprised for an instant in her eyes caused even the sedate judge to catch his breath. "But I almost wish he'd go away. It frightens me when I think of the chances he is taking—of what would happen if we were caught."

"I shouldn't worry about that too much if I were you," Judge Greer said encouragingly. "Brand is nobody's fool, and he's got a few friends left. The sheriff is due any time, and I'll have a talk with him to-night. He isn't like that pig-headed Draper He's got brains and uses 'em for something besides a plantation for his hair."

Phyllis nodded, her expression brightening a little. Then, glancing at her wrist watch, she halted the black abruptly.

"You mustn't come any farther, or you'll be late for supper," she said. "I hope I haven't bothered you too much. I couldn't help worrying, you know, and it's been a great comfort to talk to you. You—you're so understanding."

"I try to be reasonable, my dear, even though it sometimes causes me to give a rather free interpretation of the law." His eyes twinkled as he patted her shoulder encouragingly. "Try not to fret and come in again soon to see me. Very likely in a day or so I'll have more news. And Phil—it would be better, I think, not to mention what we've talked about to any one—not even your uncle."

She nodded. "I shan't," she answered. "Thanks again, so much—darling. Good-by."

The judge responded, and for several minutes after she had left him he sat motionless in the saddle, a curious expression on his face as his gaze followed the slender, graceful figure on the splendid black.

In the week since he had last seen her, a subtle, inexplicable, yet entirely definite change had come over the girl. There was a new expression in her eyes and about her delicately firm lips. Her manner had altered; even the way her head was poised upon that slender, shapely neck seemed different. Recalling the revealing look he had twice momentarily surprised in the depths of her warm, brown eyes, the judge visualized another face—piquant, laughing, red

lips a trifle full, blue eyes shadowed by masses of bright, blond hair. Suddenly he frowned.

"A pink-and-white doll!" he muttered irritably. "The boy's a fool!" He turned the sorrel and started back along the trail. "Poor Phil," he murmured, his shrewd, lined face curiously softened. "I never even guessed that things were like that."

He had almost reached the outskirts of the town before his thoughts shifted to that pair in the Broken Dollar who had shown so marked an interest in the appearance of Phyllis Marden.

"It was the mare," he decided. "They knew Brand rode off on her, and now they realize he's been to the Gridiron to make the change. I wonder, now. Perhaps it would be just as well to give that friend of Rait Wilson's the once-over and try to find out who and what he really is."

But on returning to the saloon he found the two had disappeared. It took the judge some twenty minutes and a considerable amount of judicial diplomacy to discover in a roundabout way that they had left soon after his own departure. The stranger, it appeared, was one Nate Schaeffer, who lived out on the Wayne trail, and whose only visible occupation was an occasional engagement as an extra hand on one or another of the various neighboring outfits.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONSPIRATORS.

SHE'S got the mare back." Rait Wilson's low voice was freighted with significance. "Y'understand what that means?"

Nate Schaeffer's lids drooped, and he gave a barely perceptibly nod. "I ain't quite loco," he rejoined, his gaze still fixed intently on the slim, graceful figure riding slowly down the street. "He's been over to the Gridiron an' changed horses. Must 'a' gone there right from the line camp," he added, after a brief mental calculation.

He was big and broad and handsome enough in a coarse, full-blooded way. Just now his full, red lips were slightly parted, and there was a subdued gleam in the heavy-lidded, black eyes as they continued to follow the progress of Phyllis Marden past the saloon until she drew rein in front of the door.

"Who's that jigger?" he wanted to know in the same guarded tone both of them had used.

Wilson peered around the edge of the window casement." "Old Greer," he pronounced. "The judge, you know. Sort of a friend o' the family."

"Huh!"

Schaeffer remained watchfully silent until the judge had mounted, joined the girl, and the two had ridden off together along the street. Then he turned slowly to his companion.

"You never told me them two were —friends," he commented.

"Who? Judge Greer an' Phil Marden?"

"No! Her an' this here Larrigan cuss. I thought he was soft on Maude Apgar."

A faint flush crept into Rait Wilson's lean, dark, dissipated face "You got a couple more thoughts comin'," he declared curtly. "He usta pester Maude consid'able, but I'd hate to be in his place if he turned up at the Bar V now."

Schaeffer's white teeth showed briefly in a mirthless, sardonic grin. "Yeah?" he queried. "Then what's between him an' this Marden girl?"

"Nothin' that I ever heard of," returned Wilson with honest conviction. "Phil's nothin' but a kid? She's known Larrigan all her life, same as I have, an' o' course they're friends in a way. You're way off, if you're tryin' to make anything else out of it."

Schaeffer's upper lip lifted slightly at one corner. "Am I?" he sneered.

"Lissen here. The minute she hears about that warrant she beats it to the Rafter M an' puts him wise. Gives him her pet horse to make his get-away with an' rides his home. Inside o' twelve hours or so they've swapped. You don't make nothin' o' that? Well, I'm tellin' you a girl ain't takin' chances like that—chances o' bein' drug into a dirty mess an held as accessory, jest because her an' him usta be happy playmates at school. Believe me, she's somebody to watch. If he's come back once, he'll come again, an' it looks like a pretty cinchy way o' landin' him. Follow the girl an' catch the man.' He moistened his lips and a curious gleam smoldered for an instant in his eyes. "I'll even bet," he continued slowly, "that if she dropped outa sight one o' these days he'd take all chances to hunt her out."

Wilson glanced slantwise at him, and then turned suddenly away, an expression of distaste in his slightly bloodshot eyes. "That's something for the chief to decide," he said shortly. "I had word from him this morning. Let's drag it."

With a little shrug Schaeffer followed him as he lounged across the room toward a rear door close to one end of the bar. After exchanging remarks with several acquaintances, the two passed through this into a narrow hallway from which some rickety stairs led to the second floor. Ascending these, Wilson led the way down a corridor to a room at the end of the building, pausing on the way to try the door next to it. Finding this locked, he entered the adjoining room, followed by Schaeffer, closing and locking the door behind them. Dropping down on the bed, he motioned his companion to a place beside him.

"Strikes me it would be a whole lot safer to have these little confabs in the open," remarked Schaeffer, as the springs creaked under his weight. "These partitions are so thin, anybody in the next room or out in the hall could hear without half tryin'."

Wilson gave a shrug. "The next room's a store closet that pop keeps locked up, an' I've fixed this door so it's mighty near soundproof. Nobody thinks nothin' of our comin' up here, whereas if we go trailin' off outa town an' come back in a few minutes, folks are apt to take notice."

"Mebbe you're right," commented Schaeffer, busy with a cigarette. "Well it may——"

He spoke guardedly, and Wilson, bending a little closer to him, replied in a voice which would scarcely have carried as far as the open window.

"There's a couple of miners got places on the through stage leavin' Donega for Red Butte to-night," he whispered. "Both of 'em——"

"Donega!" interrupted Schaeffer, eyebrows arching in surprise. That thriving mining town was all of eighty miles from Shelby, and in another county. "How in thunder did he get wise to that?"

"You got me. Somebody planted there, I expect. These birds are both of 'em well heeled, an' there's a full stage besides. You know the route?"

Schaeffer nodded. "Cuts across the Rattlesnake Range an' down along Green Valley. Hits the basin ten miles or so the other side o' Twin Buttes. There's a good twenty miles o' hilly country between Shelby an' the nearest point of the trail."

"Alla same, it's likely to be a good haul," pronounced Wilson in a low tone, "an' them very hills makes the get-away a cinch. Another thing—the boss wants to put the final kibosh on Larrigan."

Schaeffer's lips pursed in a noiseless whistle. "What's the idea? "I'll say we'd hung a rope around that fellah's neck a'ready."

"Not quite. What with Bale Rutherford an' that meddlin' Greer, there's consid'able doubt around that he downed

McCabe. Likewise, now things has calmed down a mite, folks that ain't got no personal grouch like Jud Logan's friends are gonna start wonderin' an' pickin' little flaws in things. But if he was glimpsed again at a hold-up, well, it might——"

"I get you," interrupted Schaeffer. "Well, where do we meet an' what time?"

"Twelve o'clock at a bend in the trail about eight miles above Twin Buttes. The stage stops there to change horses, you know, an' they'll likely be plumb weary an' the passengers asleep. It's a lonely piece o' road with a good get-away through a cañon, but I know the way, an' we'll be together. We'll leave here right after supper, an' I'll make out I'm goin' to spend the evening at your shack like I've done once or twice before. There's only one thing bothers me. I'd sure give a lot to know where that jigger went from Wayne, an' where he is right now. If he should show up any place while we're pullin' this off——"

"He won't," cut in Schaeffer with a sneer. "That business o' Red Daggett has put him in dutch. Believe me, he ain't takin' no chances for a long, lo-ng time. He's took to the mountains, an' I'm bettin' he'll stay there snug or else push on through across the border. Whichever he does will suit us."

"I'd like to be sure o' that," said Wilson doubtfully, a sudden line dividing his dark, heavy eyebrows. "Playin' a lone hand, he ain't done so worse. There's Red cashed an' Max laid up for a month or two with a mashed wrist; like enough he won't ever be able to shoot decent with his right hand. If I——"

"Aw, take a brace an' quit your fussin'," urged Schaeffer impatiently. He dropped the butt of his cigarette on the floor and ground it under one heel. "Larrigan's a dead one, I'm tellin' you. We've got him four ways to the ace—— Let's go down an' eat. I'm about starved."

Wilson paused briefly to make some small preparations for the business of the evening, and then the pair descended to the dining room. Having eaten a hearty meal, they saddled up and set off in the direction of Schaeffer's shack on the Wayne trail.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MASKED ENIGMA.

TWILIGHT was falling when they reached it, and dusk was merging into night as the two diverse figures emerged a little later from the tiny, one-room structure and paused in the shadows of the cottonwoods which towered high above the sagging roof. Schaeffer drew the door to after them. As he followed his companion toward a small corral standing more in the open, the last faint streaks of light from the west struck dull reflections from polished silver conchas and silver-plated spurs; his immaculate white shirt stood out distinctly against the somber background; the tall, white Stetson seemed to add an inch or two to his already noticeable height.

"There's a moon later, ain't there?" he questioned.

"It's on the wane," returned his well-informed companion. "Won't show up till around eleven."

Two horses were tied to the bars of the corral, and in silence the pair mounted and set off at a brisk pace toward Shelby. This portion of their journey was the most hazardous, but they met no one. About a mile and a half from the shack, Wilson turned abruptly into a gully on his right which led eastward into the hills. From that moment the two vanished from human ken.

It was nearly half past eleven before they reached their destination. The going through that hilly wilderness was slow. More than once Schaeffer

thought that his companion had lost his way. Wilson himself, in spite of his extraordinary knowledge of secret ways and obscure short cuts, had moments of uneasiness. In the end they emerged safely into a narrow cañon, to be halted presently by the fine, sharp penciling of light of an electric torch, and a curt command from an indistinct figure which stepped out of the shadows to meet them.

Quickly the light was snapped off, and after a few whispered words the new arrivals dismounted and tied their horses.

"Everybody here?" questioned Wilson as they moved forward toward the trail.

The other nodded. He was of medium height and ordinarily dressed. A broad, drooping hat brim completely concealed his features, but one had a curious feeling that out of that shadow looked a pair of eyes which missed nothing.

"You're the last," he said briefly.

Presently they were aware of other dim shapes gathered about the mouth of the cañon. This lay in deep shadow, and so did a portion of the trail beyond. A little to the north, the moonlight, streaming through a cleft between two peaks, lay upon the rough road a broad, wide patch of molten silver.

"It'll be brighter in half an hour," whispered their guide. He turned and glanced critically at Schaeffer. "You'll do," he commented. "We'll stop the stage right here an' line up the passengers alongside it. I want you to go through 'em."

Schaeffer assented promptly, his habitual bluster very much subdued. As the other turned away, Nate shot a swift, appraising glance at him from under drooping lids. It was curious, but quite true, that through all the period of their association Nate Schaeffer had never once looked upon the face of this leader of the band. Often the man was not present at their depredations, contenting himself by deputizing his authority to one of a selected few. Always at other times there was that drooping, concealing hat brim coupled frequently with an ample mask of black cambric.

The unknown's height and build were both medium; his clothes nondescript and unrevealing. He used the typical cowboy vernacular, but his voice held in it no familiar note. Though there was about the man a curious, compelling force which caused him to be obeyed swiftly and without question, Schaeffer had repeatedly searched his mind in vain for any one among his intimates or mere acquaintances who answered, even remotely, that description.

His failure annoyed and piqued him. Throughout his not uneventful career Schaeffer had been mixed up in a good many crooked enterprises, but never had these been carried through under a leadership such as this. Always he had made a point of finding out as much as he could against the man from whom he took his orders. When altercations arose it was a distinct asset; often the knowledge had been a means of profitable blackmail. To realize that he had absolutely no hold upon this unknown —that in case of disaster it was quite possible that while the rest of them were gathered in this masked enigma would slip through the net to serve, perhaps, upon their jury, was gall and wormwood to Nate Schaeffer.

He had, of course, tried pumping Wilson, but with no success. Failure also attended several other little schemes he had endeavored to put across. At any time, by the simple expedient of jerking off the unknown's mask he might have attained success. That, somehow, was a height to which even the hardened Schaeffer could not attain.

Leaning against a ledge of rock with eyes fixed moodily upon the moonlit trail the outlaw resigned himself to such unpleasant musings. He was in deep—deeper, thanks to this masquerade, than most of his companions, though this did

not trouble him so much as the feeling that he had been badly used. Always suspecting crookedness in others, he was far from satisfied with the division of the spoils.

"How do I know what he hands out is really my share," he reflected with a scowl. "How do any of us know? We take what he gives us without a question or a kick. Like enough he——"

Abruptly his musings ceased, and he turned his head, listening. An alien sound had broken the dead stillness of the night. From the northward there came a distant, rhythmic beat of hoofs. Faint and far away at first, it imperceptibly took on strength and volume.

At once the darkness of the cañon seemed to stir and palpitate. There was no sense of flurry; no brusque commands were given. Schaeffer, indeed, was conscious of no words of any sort. Masks were adjusted automatically; three figures slid across the strip of moonlit road and vanished in the dense shadows on the other side. The beat of hoofs grew louder, and mingling with them now was the creak of harness and the rattle of the swiftly moving stage.

As Schaeffer tied the red bandanna across his face a thrill went through him, and his sense of grievance vanished. Eyes glinting eagerly through the rough slits in the red cotton fabric, lips tightening grimly, he loosed his six-gun in its holster and waited.

As the stage came on, his practiced ear told him that, as Rait Wilson had predicted, the horses were growing weary. Presently one of them stumbled, and he heard the driver's oath as he dragged back on the reins. A moment later the vehicle swung around the turn in the trail. Abruptly the stillness was shattered by a rifle shot.

With a squeal one of the leaders crashed down, dragging the others to a halt, piling the whole outfit into confusion. Schaeffer moved a little forward, watchfully waiting. With a callous grin he listened to the startled exclamations mingled with a fervent curse or two. Sneeringly he watched the passengers drop to the ground, and at a curt order line up alongside the stage. With just a touch of unconscious swagger, he stepped forward into the moonlight.

The stage was searched first and yielded most of the looked-for dust. Schaeffer passed this back to one of his companions, and then turned his attention to the passengers. There were seven of them, and, save for the two miners, already mulcted and cursing ceaselessly, they yielded up their property with gratifying expedition. Watches, wallets, a ring or two were thrust feverishly upon Schaeffer, who, well aware that he was protected by the others back of him, had not even drawn his gun. He knew, too, that in the clear moonlight every movement he made was visible to that masked watcher in the shadows. Though once or twice he was strongly tempted, fear kept him from yielding.

Suddenly a little cloud drifted across the moon, turning the molten silver pathway into lead. At that instant Schaeffer had just taken into his right hand a fat wallet and a gold watch with heavy, dangling chain. For the fraction of a second he hesitated, breath quickening a trifle. But when the cloud had passed both watch and wallet were in an inside pocket of his vest, and he was exacting tribute from the last of the unfortunates.

The conclusion followed with methodic swiftness. The dead horse was stripped of its traces, the driver ordered to proceed. Passengers scrambled back; a whip cracked; the three remaining horses lunged forward, and with gradually increasing momentum the stage rattled on along the moonlit trail and out of sight.

As he delivered up his booty, Schaeffer was conscious of a momentary tingle of apprehension. There was no comment. The reaching hands took what he

thrust into them; the masked leader whispered a word or two to Wilson, and then drifted out of sight. The others followed hastily. Muffled hoofbeats sounded on rock or sand. Dim figures were swiftly engulfed in shadows as each man departed expeditiously by the way which best suited him. Schaeffer and Wilson, when they had recovered and untied their horses, might easily—to every outward seeming—have been alone amid endless miles of wilderness.

The moon hung low; the stars were just beginning to pale when the two men came out on the Wayne trail and halted.

"I'll beat it back," said Wilson. "I can slip in an' hit the hay without any one bein's the wiser."

"All right," agreed Schaeffer briefly.

He had been hoping Rait would do that. The watch sagged down his vest; the wallet bulged against his breast. Although he longed ardently to count the spoils, his triumph at having at last outwitted the masked unknown outweighed his greed.

Yet the wallet was pleasantly fat, and he burned to learn the nature of its contents. Having gained the shack, he did not even pause to unsaddle. Slipping to the ground, he flung the reins over the horse's head and made hurriedly for the closed door. There, hand upon the latch, for some strange, inexplicable reason, he hesitated just a perceptible instant.

"What the devil!" he muttered impatiently the next second.

Pressing the latch, he kicked the door open and stepped across the threshold.

To be continued in the next issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.

GOVERNMENT GIVES AWAY MORE BUFFALO

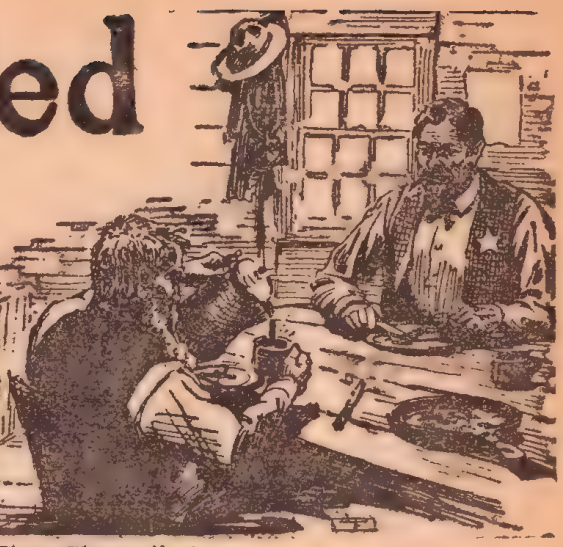
THIS year the government again made its offer to distribute surplus buffalo bulls from the great herd in Yellowstone National Park. There were about one hundred bulls available for distribution when the offer was circulated. In the fall of 1924 eighty-six buffalo were given away in this manner. The conditions under which the government supplies these animals are as follows:

Application for buffalo bulls should be made direct to the director of the national park service, department of the interior, Washington, D. C., who on approving the request, will instruct the park superintendent to make shipment. Any person desiring a buffalo bull must pay the cost of catching and transporting it from the point of capture to its new home. The cost of capturing, crating, and transporting a buffalo from the buffalo farm to Gardiner, Montana, the shipping point, is approximately eighty or eighty-five dollars. To this must be added the express charges. A buffalo will weigh from twelve hundred to twenty-five hundred pounds crated, but in considering the express rates from Gardiner to the point of destination, two thousand pounds can be considered as average weight. Based on these data, approximate rates of shipment can be obtained from the local express company. Applicants for buffalo should state for what purpose the animals are desired, what facilities are available for their care, and what aged buffalo is wanted.

All Excited

—By—

Hugh F. Grinstead



Author of "The Three Shares," etc.

STIFFLY, Sam Decker got up from the chopping block, where he had been shaping a new ax handle with a drawing knife. Gathering up an armful of shavings and light wood, he entered his cabin and threw the fuel in the corner by the stove. It was near sundown, and he proceeded at once to kindle a fire and set about cooking his supper. He had shot a mountain grouse earlier in the afternoon, and was impatient to get some of the savory flesh between his teeth.

Had Decker been called upon to tell his method of gaining a livelihood, he would doubtless have hesitated between prospector and trapper. Between the two he had, for a number of years, managed very well to make enough to satisfy his few wants; his tastes were simple. He lived alone in the isolated cabin, and no man ever went hungry from his door. It was eight miles down a rough mountain trail to the settlement and store at West Bend; across the mountain in the opposite direction, it was almost as far to his next neighbor.

When the fire was burning briskly, he set the frying pan on the stove and put therein a liberal quantity of lard. When this was smoking hot, he dropped into it four or five pieces of the dressed fowl that he had already rolled in flour.

"Hungry as I am, I can't eat more'n half that bird for supper—wish I had comp'ny," he muttered, sniffing the appetizing odor from the frying pan. "I'll just set the rest of it away and cook it for breakfast."

He opened a narrow door at the back of the room and set the uncooked portion of the grouse on a shelf, in what appeared to be a sort of pantry adjoining the main room of the cabin. It was, in reality, more in the nature of a cellar; for the cabin was built on a steep hillside, and this addition was dug back into the hill, and roofed with poles and earth. It had neither window nor outside door; all the light that reached it coming through the door communicating with the main room. It made an excellent storeroom, cool in summer and frostproof in winter.

With coffee boiling in the pot and bread in the oven, he placed a tin plate and cup on the rough pine table. As he paused between stove and table, he became suddenly aware of a shadow falling across the floor. He looked up quickly to see a stranger standing in the open doorway. That the man had approached the cabin cautiously was evident from the alert manner in which he

stood, his right hand hovering near the butt of the pistol at his hip. He might easily have passed for a miner or a lumberman, or he may have been neither. A week-old stubble of beard covered his face, and his clothes were dusty from much travel afoot.

"Hello, old-timer," he greeted pleasantly enough, resting a hand against the door facing.

"Howdy, mister, come right in—just in time for supper," Decker invited.

The man hesitated a moment, glancing warily about him, peering into the far corners of the room, which were already dark with the falling twilight, before crossing the threshold. Even then he did not take the stool his host had pushed toward the center of the room, but seated himself on an empty box near the door. There followed a long minute of silence, in which Decker opened the door to the little storeroom at the back and brought out the remainder of the grouse. The stranger glanced keenly into the blackness beyond the narrow door, which had been left open.

Whatever his curiosity concerning this cautious stranger, Sam Decker refrained from asking the question that might be taken as an open breach of the rules of hospitality. If the man desired to make known his business, he would do so in his own time.

"You don't often have visitors up here, I take it," the stranger finally observed.

"Sometimes it's a whole month that I don't see nobody."

"Likely you'd remember about all the people you see passing through in the course of a year, could describe most of 'em."

"Allow it wouldn't be much of a trick."

"If you'd seen a man. medium height, dark hair, gray eyes, and heavy mustache, in the last few days, you'd be sure to remember it?"

"I ain't saw no such man," Decker replied with a slow shake of the head, not realizing that perhaps half the men he did see would have answered to this vague description. "No, I ain't seen but one man a-tall since the snow went off, and——"

"Oh, I'm pretty sure the man I'm looking for didn't come back this way," the stranger interrupted.

Decker shot a swift, inquiring glance toward his visitor, but was not rewarded with further information at that moment. The short twilight following the disappearance of the sun was quickly fading into darkness. Decker shut the door and lighted a small brass lamp. The cabin was without a window, unless the unglazed opening high up under the eaves could be so called. He then put another plate and cup on the table, and a little later turned the crisply fried pieces of wild fowl into a tin pan. When he had pushed the stool up to one side of the table and had placed a box for himself, he invited his guest to share the meal with him.

Conversation usually flows sluggishly while hungry men eat. The stranger was beginning on his second piece of fried grouse before he ventured farther than a necessary monosyllable. When he finally spoke again, it was in a more confidential tone.

"I didn't tell you right off, but I'm mighty keen to lay my hands on that fellow I mentioned," he said. "Seeing him is not just the same as catching him, either. Fact is, I saw him not three hours ago—took a shot at him. He got away and hid in the brush."

Sam Decker involuntarily jerked himself erect at the startling news.

"You don't mean that he's a—a——"

"He's a mighty dangerous man, robbed the express office and shot the agent down at Pineville a week or ten days ago, and give the officers over there the slip. Officers all over this part of the State have been on his trail, but

seems like I'm the only one that thought about looking in here for him. I wouldn't have, only I heard there was a suspicious-looking stranger headed this way several days ago."

"And you're a officer chasing this bad hombre lone handed?"

"Uh-huh, constable over at Three Cedars," the stranger replied, ostentatiously throwing back his coat to display a gleaming star pinned to his vest.

"Looks like four or five of you would have better luck if he's a real bad un."

"Best to take him by surprise, and one man by himself can work that better than a crowd. Thought I'd prowl around some to-night, smelling out his fire if he's camped somewhere up here on the mountain."

"Wouldn't be a bad idee, seems like."

"No, he wouldn't be likely to leave a good hiding place like it is up here, with all the open country being scoured by posses looking for him. Reason I slipped up so easy a while ago was that I thought he might be hanging out in this cabin. As it is, you could be of some help to me in catching him."

"Me help you catch him?" Decker asked uneasily.

"Well, there wouldn't be anything much for you to do. You know, of course, what the law says about aiding criminals to escape, and interfering with an officer in the discharge of his duty."

"Oh, I wouldn't hinder you none, and I wouldn't help that feller to get away; but I'd a heap rather stay nootral if anybody has got to be shot up."

"Not likely to be any shooting. All you got to do is to be on the lookout for him and ready, if he shows up here any time. Don't tell him anything about me, but keep him here some way or other. He won't be suspecting you, so you could easy get the drop on him, take his gun away from him, or crack him over the head and put him in that cubby-hole yonder."

"Uh-huh."

"I'd make it worth your while, all right. You wouldn't have any trouble knowing him when you saw him—wears a gray hat and a dark coat. Wouldn't surprise me if he would happen in on you any time, maybe in the morning. If I don't run across him myself, I'll drop in here again to-morrow."

In the long interval of silence that followed this announcement, they finished eating. Decker swept the plates and cups from the little table into a pan, while the stranger stood up and reached for his hat. At that moment both men were startled by a noise, as if a small stone had been thrown against the door. Decker started toward the door to open it, but the other man held out a restraining hand, at the same time whispering hoarsely:

"Bet that's him now—here, let me hide in your pantry—get the drop on him without any trouble once he's in here."

Within five seconds after the stone struck the door, the man from Three Cedars was inside the little storeroom with the door tightly closed. From force of habit, Decker dropped in place the pin that secured the door. He then went to the outside door of his cabin and threw it wide open.

At first he saw only blank darkness in front of him, but as he stepped outside to look around, he was aware of a movement in the shadows a few yards to his right and a man stepped into view. He wore a dark coat and a gray felt hat!

"Excuse me, pardner, for knocking at your door the way I done," he said. "It ain't always safe to stand too close to a door, when you don't know who's inside. You here all by your lonesome?"

"Y-yes," Decker answered uncertainly.

"If it wouldn't be too much trouble, I'd like to get a bite of supper. I'll pay you for it. Been tramping over this mountain since morning without any

grub. Thought I'd make it down to the settlement before night, but something happened that kept me from it."

"Come in, it won't be no great big job to throw something together. Just finished eating, myself, but there is coffee and bread and I can soon fry some bacon."

Sam Decker's heart was thumping with excitement as he let this second stranger in and closed the door. He had wished for company, but not so much excitement as this last arrival was likely to provide. Undoubtedly this was the man who had robbed the express company at Pineville, the man the Three Cedars constable had seen and shot at but a few hours before. Any lurking doubt was removed when the stranger took off his hat, and with a chuckle thrust his finger through a bullet hole in the crown.

"Fellow took a pot shot at me up here on the mountain since noon," he declared. "Might have been a different story if I had seen him first. Didn't blame him, though; guess he had good reasons for being so quick on the draw."

At this Decker glanced apprehensively toward the door leading to the storeroom. With much concern he realized for the first time that he had, in his excitement, fastened the door with the pin, virtually making a prisoner of the man within. However, at his first opportunity, perhaps while this later arrival was eating, he would slip over and unfasten the door. With the officer at liberty, he couldn't just vision an easy conquest of this wiry stranger under the gray hat. He would much prefer being somewhere else when the two confronted each other. Both men were armed.

While Decker was slicing bacon the man spoke again; but instead of clearing up any uncertainty that might have existed, his first sentence raised a mountain of doubt in the mind of his host, causing his jaw to drop in utter consternation.

"Yes, I guess a man with a price on his head would take a shot at anybody he suspected of being on his trail," the stranger continued.

Decker made no reply, and he went on.

"Thought you was him when you first opened the door, being you are about the same size and build. He's some younger, though, gray eyes and dark hair, medium weight. You ain't seen a man answering to that description around here, have you?"

Sam Decker knew he was at that moment looking at a man who would fit that vague description, and there flashed upon his mind, also, the knowledge that confined in the narrow store room at the back of the cabin was another of the same general type. For obvious reasons, he shook his head in answer to the query.

"And I guess this fellow would have about a week-old beard on his face. The handbill don't mention beard, and I didn't get a good look at him to-day, but it's been more than a week since he hid out," the stranger concluded, as he fumbled in his pocket and brought out a yellow sheet of paper, which he spread out on the table.

Even by the dim light from the smoky lamp, it was not difficult to read the glaring lines of bold-face type announcing the offer of a reward for the capture of one Bruce Davis, alias "Denver Pete," wanted for killing the express agent and robbing the safe at Pineville the week before. There followed the description, "medium height, dark hair and gray eyes!"

"And—and it was him you seen today?" Decker gasped out.

"Sure, who else would be trying to pot an officer but the guy he was hunting? That's the way I come to know for certain. A fellow answering this here description was seen on a trail

coming up the far side of the mountain not two days ago, and I cut right in after him."

"Uh-huh, I see."

Sam Decker didn't see, far from it. If he were to believe the story of this man, which was indeed plausible enough, he had but to inform him that the man who had shot the hole in his hat, the killer of the express agent at Pineville, was safely imprisoned in the rear room. When, after a moment's consideration, he concluded that the story of the other man had been equally convincing, he knew he could not do this. If he allowed the man with the gray hat to go on his way unmolested, he might be guilty of aiding a criminal to escape while at the same time hindering an officer in the discharge of his duty by keeping him locked up. On the other hand, to turn this new arrival over to the Three Cedars man could just as well be a breach of the law that would prove to be a disastrous mistake.

That one of the men was a criminal and the other an officer seemed evident enough—but which was the criminal? It was a very clever ruse on the part of one or the other to impersonate an officer.

As long as he was in doubt as to the identity of the two men he would keep hands off. But could he? The only way to remain neutral in the matter would be to give each man an equal show, to liberate the Three Cedars man and let the two settle it between them. That would doubtless bring on gun play, in which the wrong man might be killed, perhaps both of them. Their innocent host would also be in danger from stray bullets. He would have to devise some way to extricate himself from the dilemma in which he found himself through no fault of his own.

He poured coffee and invited the man with the mustache to take the same chair that had been occupied but a few minutes before by the one who represented himself as the constable of Three Cedars. A slight scratching noise from behind the closed door to the storeroom became distinctly audible.

"Pack rats pester the life out of me here," Decker hastily explained, as the man seated at the table cocked his head to listen.

Evidently the man in the storeroom was becoming impatient, was wondering why he had not been given the cue to make his appearance. Perhaps he had tried the door to find it fastened, the knowledge changing his impatience to suspicion. In any case an uproar would gain him nothing, might precipitate matters to his disadvantage. The scratching noise ceased after a moment, and all was quiet again.

It wasn't at all warm in the room, but Sam Decker was sweating freely. He was confronted by a difficult problem, the solution of which required deep and quick thinking—always a hard task for him. As he passed around the table to serve his guest he was within a foot of the door leading to the storeroom. He reached out a hand to remove the pin, but hesitated when he reflected that such a move would give the Three Cedars man a decided advantage, enabling him to come without warning upon the man calmly eating his supper.

As he stood there undecided, his hand within an inch of the closed door, there flashed into his mind the alternative: Why not capture both men? Evidently one of them was the criminal, and if he could disarm and take both men down to Sand Flat where they could be identified, he was sure to get the right one. It was so simple, he wondered that he had not thought of it before.

A pack rope, eight or ten feet long, hung on a nail at the back of the cabin. As Decker walked back toward the table he swept the short rope from its

place. There was already a loop in one end, and as he passed behind the man seated at the table he tossed the quickly made noose over his head and pinioned his arms at his side with a quick jerk that almost overturned the stool. A deftly turned half hitch, and the stranger was helpless. Almost simultaneously he was relieved of his revolver.

"Here, you old fool, what are you trying to do?" the man sputtered when he could find his voice.

"Already done it."

"But I'm an officer of the law, and I'll have you jailed for interfering with me."

"You got gray eyes and dark hair and you're just about medium in size, to say nothing about them mustaches."

"But—but——"

"Save your breath, it won't get you nowhere. They's another fellow here handy, the one that shot at you, as says he's a officer a-hunting a man just like you."

"He's a killer and a robber, and you're just playing in with him. I'll——"

The man from Three Cedars was hammering insistently upon the door, the tumult that reached his ears having advised him of the turn affairs had taken. Now certain that his other captive was securely bound, Decker slipped the pin so that the door could be opened a few inches.

"Hand your gun out through that crack before I let you out," he demanded.

"What you mean, asking an officer to give up his gun with a killer right here in the room?"

"I heard a-plenty from fellers as says they're officers. One of you is a awful liar, and I don't know but one way to find out which is which. Come across or stay in there till you're good and ready."

With much grumbling the man from Three Cedars passed his gun through the opening. In spite of his protests, he was compelled to thrust his hands through and let them be tied together before he was allowed to step through the door into the light.

"That's him—that's the scoundrel that shot at me—he's the killer all right!" shouted the man with the gray hat.

"Sure, I shot at you, after I called to you to halt and you kept on going. Don't the instructions say take him dead or alive?"

"Great bluff you're trying to run, but if this old duffer hadn't balled things up this way, I'd have you in jail before morning, sure as your name's 'Denver Pete.'"

"Denver Pete! Big bluffer! I'll show——"

"Shut up, both of you!" exclaimed Decker. "My head's a-going round and round trying to figger this thing out. Only way I can do is march you down to Sand Flat and turn you over to the sheriff."

"Huh, think you'll hog the reward money after I done all the work, do you?" said the man from Three Cedars, sneering. "Well, you'll have another think coming if we ever get there with this killer. The sheriff knows me."

"Knows me, all right."

"I ain't after no reward, just want to be let alone. Long as you fellers has got me into this mess, you got to keep still and let me get out my own way. First one opens his mouth now gets a greasy dish rag stuck in it."

Without another word, he tied his prisoners together and started them on the long hike down the trail to Sand Flat. The sun was just rising when they reached the county seat and went at once to the sheriff's house.

The sheriff laughed heartily when he took in the situation from the rather disjointed explanation of the three of them.

"These two men are officers, all right,

and if La Luz County wasn't so all-fired big I reckon they would have knowed each other, being as one is constable over to Three Cedars and the other at Rocky Point," the sheriff explained. "But you won't have no trouble, Sam, interfering with them in the discharge of their duty; you maybe interfered with 'em shooting each other. This Denver Pete was caught early yesterday morning over in the next county."

"And I been all het up and excited for nothing," Sam Decker declared as he turned toward the two constables, who were exchanging sheepish grins.

MADE BULLET THAT SLEW IRON JACKET

A VETERAN gunmaker of Austin, Texas, who has been in that business there for seventy-three years, is J. C. Petmecky. Mr. Petmecky made guns for many of the old pioneers, scouts, and Indian fighters. Among his customers were Sam Houston, Sull Ross, "Big-foot" Wallace, Ben McCulloch, and other noted Texans. One of the old gunsmith's most important and memorable tasks was the making of a specially large pointed bullet for Sull Ross, who had joined the Texas Rangers for the purpose of killing the hostile Indian known as Iron Jacket. This redskin brave had in some manner got hold of an old suit of fine Spanish armor, which no ordinary bullet could penetrate. Iron Jacket was the terror of the settlers.

Before Sull Ross went out on his trail, Petmecky rechambered his gun and fitted it with extra large pointed bullets. It was one of these bullets from Ross' gun that killed Iron Jacket, when he and his band were surprised and surrounded by a party of rangers. The Indian's suit of armor was kept at the old capitol building until that edifice was destroyed by fire.

THE BEAR'S MISTAKE

THIS story is retailed with the proviso that no reader should feel compelled to accept it as true unless he is convinced of its plausibility. It has been going the rounds recently as an anecdote related by Irvin S. Cobb.

During the past summer, Doctor Dudley Roberts, a New York City physician, was on an outing in the wilds of Glacier National Park, in Montana, in company with his son and Mr. Cobb and Jim Whilt, the Rocky Mountain poet-guide. On camping at the Snowshoe ranger cabin, they noticed bear tracks. In the night the others of the party were aroused by a shout from Doctor Roberts. They brought out their flash lights and found the doctor with blood streaming from a cut in his head. They also caught sight of a young black bear running away from the scene. It is supposed that the bear mistook the doctor's bald head for a stone and tried to turn it over with its paw, while searching for ants. However, as already stated, we do not vouch for the story or the explanation. It's just one of those believe-it-or-not tales that come out of the great open spaces from time to time.

Your Dog

By David Post

Author of "The Gordon Setter," etc.

THE IRISH SETTER

AS is the case with others of the setter family, the Irish setter is believed to be derived from an English spaniel. Just which other breeds have been combined to produce the Irish setter is not known. Probably in early days, this dog was taken from England into Ireland, and there developed. The Irish setter is mentioned as early as 1725, when it was either red or red and white.

Writers of that, and a somewhat later period, refer to the Irish setter as a wonderful bird dog, fast in the field, and of excellent stamina. That cannot be said, without reservations, of the Irish setter of to-day. Of late years, attention has been concentrated on breeding for a mahogany-red or golden-chestnut coat. As a consequence, the field qualities of the Irish setter are not so outstandingly good as they once were. Of course, this is not true of all members of the breed. If you want a very beautiful, lovable companion, then the Irish setter will please you very much; in addition, your choice may be trained to flush birds well.

The standard for the Irish setter, as adopted by the Irish Setter Club of America, is as follows:

Head—Long and lean. The skull should be oval from ear to ear, with a well-defined occipital protuberance and plenty of brain room. The brows should be raised, showing the "stop." From the stop to the end of the nose the length should be fair, the nostrils should be wide, and the jaws of equal length; the flews not pendulous. The muzzle should be moderately deep and fairly square at the end. Either dark mahogany or dark chocolate is the correct color for the nose, and that of the eyes, which should not be too large, is rich hazel or brown. The ears should be of moderate size, fine in texture, set on low and well back, and hanging in a neat fold close to the head.

Neck—Moderately long, slightly arched, very muscular, but not too thick. It should be free from all tendency to throatiness.

Body—Proportionately long. The shoulders should be fine at the points, deep, and sloping well back. The chest should be deep, rather narrow in front; the ribs well sprung, so as to give plenty of lung room. The loins should be slightly arched, the hindquarters wide and powerful.

Legs and Feet—The hind legs from the hip to the hock should be long and muscular; from hock to heel, short and strong; the stifle and hock joints should be well bent, and not inclined either in or out. Strong and sinewy, the forelegs

should have plenty of bone, with elbows free, well let down, and, like the hock, not inclined either in or out. The feet should be rather small and very firm; the toes, strong, close together, and arched.

Tail—Of moderate length, set on rather low, strong at the root, and tapering to a fine point. It should be carried either in a slight, scimitarlike curve or straight and nearly level with the back.

Coat—On the head, front of legs and tips of the ears, the coat should be short and fine, but on all other parts of the body it should be of moderate length, flat, and as free as possible from curd or wave.

Feathering—The feather on the upper portion of the ears should be long and silky; on the back of the fore and hind legs, long and fine. There should be a fair amount of hair on the belly, forming a nice fringe, which may extend onto the chest and throat. The feet should be well feathered between the toes. The tail should have a fringe of moderately long hair, decreasing in length as it approaches the point. All feathering should be as straight and as flat as possible.

Color and Markings—The color should be a rich golden chestnut or mahogany red, with no trace whatever of black. White on chest, throat, or toes, or a small star on the forehead, or a narrow streak or blaze on the nose or face, however, does not disqualify an entry.

When Irish setters are judged at American bench shows, the following scale of points is used: Head, 10; eyes, 5; ears, 5; neck, 5; body, 15; shoulders, forelegs, and feet, 12; hind legs, 10; tail, 8; coat and feather, 8; color, 8; size, style, and general appearance, 14.

Another bird dog, the wire-haired pointing griffon, will be introduced to you in next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.

INDIANS' HORSES DESTROYED

ACCORDING to a recent report made by Doctor R. M. Ashley, government inspector of livestock in the States of New Mexico and Arizona, there is a peculiar disease prevalent among the horses of the Indians on the western boundaries of the Hopi and Navajo reservations in Arizona. On one of his tours of inspection of this region, he was obliged to order the destruction of one hundred and thirty horses from those reservations. Blood tests of the animals were sent to Washington before they were killed.

"ARIZONA BILL" HIKING EAST

AN interesting feat is being undertaken by Colonel R. E. Gardner, popularly known in the Southwest as "Arizona Bill," a picturesque figure of the early pioneer days, and an associate of Kit Carson, Buffalo Bill, General Custer, Captain Lawton, Jim Bridger and others who took part in the making of the West. Arizona Bill, now seventy-eight years of age, is making a long-distance hike from his native Arizona to Philadelphia, in order to attend the exhibition to be held in that city next year in commemoration of the 105th anniversary of American independence.

The old-timer is making the trip dressed in the rough and ready clothes that he has worn all his life. He has two burros carrying his grub and equipment. The exhibition for which he is headed will open on April 30, 1926.

"Grizzly" Gallagher and the Otter

by *Reginald C. Barker*

Author of "Wanted!" etc.

EHIND a brushy cat spruce, "Grizzly" Gallagher waited until the young fellow, kneeling by the trap, arose with an orange-throated, silver-faced marten in his hand; then the old man spoke incisively.

"Reach for a star, pardner; any old star will do."

The marten dropped in the snow, as Jack Haslitt turned a fear-blanched face toward the bearded man in the otter-skin cap, whose gray eyes gleamed over the barrel of a .45 Colt. Suddenly the old trapper lowered his gun, and compassion softened the steel in his eyes.

"I swan!" he exclaimed softly. "I most sartinly do. Stealing another man's furs, and you hardly more than a boy."

A spark of anger leaped into Jack Haslitt's eyes, and he made a leap for the rifle he had left leaning against a tree; Grizzly Gallagher's gun menaced him again.

"No use trying to shoot it out with me, son," he warned. "You wouldn't stand a chance."

"Who are you?" blurted out the young fellow, as he stared into the black eye of the .45. "I didn't know there was another trapper in this section of the hills."

"I'm twenty miles from camp," acknowledged the old trapper, "but that trap you were robbing is on one of my lines."

"You aren't—you can't be Grizzly Gallagher?" asked Jack Haslitt.

"That's what folks call me," said the old trapper, "'count of my whiskers being tipped with white."

"I'm sorry," said the young fellow simply. "I've heard about you, and I wouldn't have touched your furs if we'd starved.

"We?" interrogated the old trapper. "Then you aren't alone?"

"My wife is back in a tent on the head of Seventy-six Creek," said Haslitt. "She and I came to the hills to trap, but so far we hadn't caught anything. When I found that trap, I didn't see any tracks so I thought I had stumbled across an abandoned line. I didn't know I was stealing."

"I swan!" exclaimed Grizzly Gal-

lagher, running a hand through his thick, silver-tipped hair. "You mean to tell me that your wife is living up here in a tent at the beginning of winter?"

"It's our first winter in the hills," explained Haslitt, "but I'd always wanted to trap, so when work slackened up on the XQ Seven last fall, Bonnie and I decided to try our luck."

"XQ Seven?" inquired Grizzly Gallagher. "Sounds like the name of a Basquo sheep-herder. You aren't a sheep-herder, are you?"

"Cattle's my line," replied Haslitt. "Learned to throw a rope almost before I could walk. XQ Seven was the boss' brand."

Grizzly Gallagher picked up the marten Haslitt had dropped.

"Give that to your wife, son," he said, "and welcome to the Big Hills."

"Bonnie will be waiting," said Haslitt as he caught the gnarled hand of the old trapper in his strong young grip, "and she'll be pleased to meet Grizzly Gallagher."

Side by side the young man and the bearded old trapper shuffled through the thin snow. Suddenly Haslitt stopped and pointed his finger to a great round track.

"Bear?" he inquired. "I ran across it on my way out, but I was afraid to follow it while alone."

"Cougar," corrected Grizzly Gallagher, "and a big one!"

"Couldn't we track him down?" asked Haslitt excitedly.

" 'Tain't no manner of use trying to catch up with a cougar without the help of dogs," replied Grizzly Gallagher. "Inside of a few hours he'd be tracking us."

Yet Jack Haslitt could not keep his eyes off the line of great round tracks which paralleled their own, as he led the way back to his camp.

Suddenly he stopped again, and a look of fear suddenly appeared in his eyes. The tracks of the cougar had swerved at right angles to the trail, and right beside them were the tracks of a woman.

"Bonnie's tracks!" he exclaimed. "My wife's tracks. The cougar is on her trail!"

"Easy, son," cautioned Grizzly Gallagher, laying a great hand on Haslitt's shoulder. "Nothing ever was gained by being in too much of a hurry. Does your wife carry a gun?"

"Single-shot, twenty-two caliber Winchester," answered Jack Haslitt, "but Bonnie couldn't hit a barn door twenty feet away."

"You follow the cougar tracks, then," ordered the old trapper, "and I'll circle around, and cut in ahead of you, for he can't track us all at once and I may be able to head him off. If you do happen to catch up with him, aim at a spot between his eyes and get him with the first shot."

That cougars seldom attack people Grizzly Gallagher was well aware; but he also knew that when the big cats do attack human beings, they usually select a woman or a child. Therefore the old trapper lost little time in cutting across the heads of several of the deep gulches which lay between him and his objective.

He reached it at last. A high point of rock which overlooked the head of the cañon up which the cougar had been following the girl. Flat on his stomach, the old trapper cautiously peered into the cañon below. His nerve almost failed him at what he saw.

Crouched at full length on a branch of a great fir tree, a big, reddish-furred cougar was watching a girl, who, all unconscious of her peril, was slowly walking through the snow.

Grizzly Gallagher's first impulse was to cut loose with his .45; then realizing that the range was so great that he might only wound and infuriate the animal, he lifted his voice in a mighty shout.

Bonnie Haslitt raised her head and

peered upward, and Grizzly Gallagher almost thought he could see the terror in her eyes as her gaze fell on the red devil in the tree above her.

The old trapper's heart turned to ice as he saw the girl slowly back away with her impotent little weapon raised to her shoulder. In the hands of an expert shot the gun might have done the work, but Jack Haslitt had said his wife couldn't hit a barn door at twenty feet!

Again Grizzly Gallagher shouted, then with unexpected agility for a man in his seventieth year, he scrambled down the steep wall of the cañon. Still shouting in an effort to scare the great cat away, he clumsily galloped across the snow.

He was none too soon, for determined to sell her life dearly, Bonnie Haslitt drew a bead with her rifle right between the gleaming eyes of the great cat outstretched on the branch above her. When she fired, the glancing bullet made a few flakes of bark jump from a branch four or five inches above that tawny skull.

Snarling with anger, the great cat gathered its hind feet beneath it. The muscles in its haunches rippled as it dug its two inch claws into the bark. It prepared to launch its one hundred and thirty pounds of concentrated fury at the defenseless girl now fumbling at the breech of her little rifle in an effort to reload.

Smashing through the underbrush, Grizzly Gallagher reached her side, just as the great body of the cougar left the tree. With one huge hand the old trapper gave the girl a shove which caused her to drop her rifle, and sent her staggering ten feet. Then the gun in Grizzly Gallagher's right hand rose and roared, once, twice, thrice. Mortally wounded by the heavy slugs, the great cat bit at his side, then crashed down in a snarling heap at Grizzly Gallagher's feet.

Panting for breath, Grizzly Gallagher removed his otter-skin cap and passed a huge hand over his silver-tipped hair.

"I swan!" he exclaimed, "I most sartinly do!"

When a few minutes later, Jack Haslitt came up at a run, his wife was seated near the body of the cougar with its head on her lap. Speechlessly he raised her to her feet and gathered her into his arms, then he turned to thank the man who had saved her.

Grizzly Gallagher had stolen away, and a few snowflakes were drifting down among the pines, as though trying to hide his tracks.

"How can we ever repay him, dear?" asked Bonnie as her husband began to skin the great red cat.

Jack Haslitt shook his head in perplexity. "It looks as though we never can," he admitted, "but we'll try and find a way."

"Grizzly Gallagher told me where he has his camp over on the Middle Salmon," said Bonnie, "and he said if ever we needed any advice about the trapping, or that if ever there was anything he could do to help us out, to come over and get him."

Jack Haslitt hardly heard what she was saying; for he was looking down at the great red devil Grizzly Gallagher had killed.

"Do you know what I'd like to do, Bonnie?" he asked suddenly, with a gleam of excitement in his eyes.

"What?"

"I'd like to be astride of a good cow pony," said Jack Haslitt, "and get one of those big cats at the end of a thirty-five foot rope."

"Still hankering after the open range, boy?" asked Bonnie.

"Aren't you?"

Bonnie Haslitt looked upward at the gray sky, noted the moan of the wind, and shivered as it swept a flurry of snow against her cheek.

"We'll be back at the XQ Seven,

dear," she said, "in time for the spring round-up."

All the way back to their camp they talked of the life they knew. To their excited fancy the moaning of the wind became the bawling of cattle; the smell of the pines seemed suddenly to take on the tang of the purple sage that stretched from the line fence of the XQ Seven southward to the Blue Owyhees.

For hours that evening the little tin stove glowed red within the tent they had pitched on the banks of Seventy-six Creek; then slowly it grew cold. At midnight Bonnie awoke her husband.

"Listen," she said, "I'm afraid."

As they held their breath, outside they could hear something scratching in the snow, then an empty tin can rattled.

Reaching into the dark, Jack Haslitt found his rifle.

Slowly and quietly he arose to his feet and pushing the flap of the tent aside, looked out. But he could not see anything, for the world had become nothing more than a whirling white chaos of snow. So he closed the flap of the tent and lay down again. Unseen and unheard loneliness crept into the tent with him and sat by the cold stove.

The snow covered all their traps that night, and next morning it was so soft and slushy, that Jack Haslitt refused to let his wife accompany him while he dug out and reset the traps. All day long she sat alone by the little stove in the snowed-in tent. The loneliness of the big hills fell upon her and filled her heart with strange forebodings.

Suppose something should happen to Jack. Suppose he should slip into the lashing torrent where Seventy-six Creek swept through its granite-walled cañon. What would she do all alone in the big hills? What could she do?

How foolish they had been to try to winter in a tent, ran her thoughts. Why hadn't they built a cabin before snow came? She would speak to Jack about that when he returned—if he ever returned.

When the day was growing old and the pines were whispering fearfully of the long night to come, Jack Haslitt returned, soaked to the skin and weary.

"Not a thing in the traps," he said, as his wife rushed out of the tent and flung her arms around his neck, "but perhaps we'll have better luck to-night, dear; down at the edge of the big eddy below the falls I found some tracks which I think were left by an otter."

She was too glad to see him back to pay much attention to what he was saying. Hurrying him inside she made him put on dry clothing before she sat him down to a meal of golden biscuits and steaming hot beans.

Jack Haslitt looked thoughtful when his wife suggested that they build a cabin.

"I don't know the first thing about it," he said, "and I don't believe we could do it alone."

"Why couldn't we go and ask Grizzly Gallagher to help us, dear?" asked Bonnie. "I'm sure he would."

"There's something to that," acknowledged her husband. "I'll go over and see him after I have looked at the traps I set for the otter."

"We'll both go," decided Bonnie. "I'm not going to spend another day alone."

Next morning the otter traps were empty, but all around them the snow was packed down where the otters had played during the night.

"If it wasn't that you have already caught one marten," said Bonnie that evening, "I'd almost believe that there was no fur left in the hills."

Suddenly a thought crossed her mind, and she looked her husband straight in the eye. "Are you sure, dear," she asked, "that you didn't take that marten from one of Grizzly Gallagher's traps?"

"Why——" taken by surprise, Jack

Haslitt hardly knew how to answer; then he blurted out his story, ending up with, "but I wouldn't have taken the marten had I known it belonged to Grizzly Gallagher. I thought I had stumbled on to an abandoned line."

Steadily Bonnie's blue eyes looked into his as she listened; then she laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Didn't you take the marten because you didn't want to come back to me empty-handed?" she asked.

With womanly intuition she had hit on the truth, and knowing it, Jack Haslitt bowed his head.

"We'll have to take it back, dear," insisted Bonnie. "We'll have to make Grizzly Gallagher take the marten back."

All next day they followed the line of blazed trees which Grizzly Gallagher had told Bonnie marked the snow-hidden trail which led to his camp.

They reached it as dusk was creeping over the Big Hills.

The cabin was empty.

"He'll be back after a while," said Jack Haslitt hopefully. "Guess I'll kindle a fire in the stove while we wait."

But midnight came and still Grizzly Gallagher had not returned.

"Do you suppose that he has got hurt?" asked Bonnie fearfully. "Perhaps somewhere out in the night, Grizzly Gallagher is dying."

There was nothing they could do that night. When at dawn, heavy-eyed from lack of sleep, they opened the cabin door and looked outside, they both gave a cry of dismay. For during the night it had snowed again and covered any tracks which might have led them to Grizzly Gallagher.

"He told me he had spent forty-five years in the Big Hills," said Bonnie, "but it looks as though they have got him at last."

"There's no way of knowing which way he went," said Jack Haslitt, "but I'll fire three shots and perhaps he will hear them and answer."

From cañon to cañon the shots echoed and reëchoed, but the ensuing silence remained unbroken.

Sadly Haslitt and his wife cleaned up the dishes they had used, then softly closing the cabin door they started home.

"Cook up enough grub to last us until we reach the settlement at Cape Horn," suggested Jack Haslitt to his wife, when at dusk they saw their tent looming through the trees. "We'd better go out and report Grizzly Gallagher's death."

With a heavy heart, Bonnie pushed aside the flap of the tent and entered, then suddenly she recoiled with a cry of alarm that made her husband reach for his gun.

"There's something inside the tent, Jack," exclaimed Bonnie. "I think it is a bear."

Gritting his teeth to keep up his courage, Jack Haslitt stepped into the tent and fired at a fearful-looking, dark-colored beast, that was backed up in one corner snarling.

When the smoke cleared, a huge wolverine lay lifeless among the flour he had scattered all over the ground.

Flour, sugar and beans were mixed in a soiled mass, entirely unfit for food.

"What will we do?" said Bonnie, sobbing. "What will we do?"

Slowly Jack Haslitt's gaze wandered around the tent; there was not a single article of food which had escaped the ravages of the animal that they once before had heard prowling around the tent at night. Utterly unused to taking care of themselves in the Big Hills, Jack Haslitt and his wife faced the prospect of starvation.

Suddenly Jack Haslitt's face lightened, as his gaze fell on a coiled rope hanging on the tent pole at the head of the bed. Taking it down, he ran the coils lovingly through his fingers. Then

he coiled it again and hung it on his belt.

"At least he didn't get my lariat," he said, "and from now on I'm going to carry it on my belt."

In misery too great for speech they began to clean up the tent. When at last they finished, their dismay was greater than ever, for there was not a single article of food left that they could possibly have eaten. True to its nature, the ugly beast had defiled everything it had touched.

"And we haven't enough grub left in our packs," said Bonnie, wailing, "to enable us to reach the settlements."

"Don't you go to worrying now," comforted her husband; "there is lots of food in Grizzly Gallagher's cabin. I'm sure if he were alive he would want us to use it."

"But how can we reach his cabin?" asked Bonnie. "I'm too tired to make that trip again. And I won't let you go alone. No, I'd rather starve to death with you, than to stay another day alone."

"In the morning we'll run down our line of traps," said Jack Haslitt. "Perhaps we may have caught a squirrel or two as we've done before. At least they would furnish us enough food to last us until we can reach Grizzly Gallagher's cabin."

Weak with hunger and misery they left the tent at dawn and stumbled through the snow to where they had set their first trap. Then the icy hand of fear clutched their hearts. The trap was gone!

"Some one has been stealing our traps," said Jack Haslitt, as he pointed to a long line of human footprints disappearing among the pines.

"Who can it be?" whispered Bonnie.

"Who can it be," repeated her husband, "but Grizzly Gallagher?"

"I don't believe it!" exclaimed Bonnie. "Grizzly Gallagher is not that kind of a man."

"We'll soon see," said Jack Haslitt grimly fingering his rifle. "Those tracks were made since it quit snowing. Come on, let's follow them."

Silently Bonnie followed her husband as, tight-lipped, he strode through the snow, only to find that trap after trap had been removed.

"Do you know what I'm going to do when we catch up with him?" asked Jack Haslitt suddenly.

"Not kill him, Jack! You wouldn't kill him?"

"Grizzly Gallagher will wish himself dead when I get through with him," boasted her husband taking his lariat from his belt, "for I'm going to drag him through the snow at the end of a thirty-five foot rope!"

But they saw no sign of the old trapper as they followed the tracks through the pines to where their trap line ended at the big eddy below the falls of Seventy-six Creek.

Suddenly the falls appeared. A curtain of water pouring over a granite ledge into a creaming caldron forty feet below. Over the eddy hung a veil of spray, irridescent in the winter sunshine.

"There he is!" exclaimed Jack Haslitt, "and he's got the otter I was trying to catch."

Bonnie stared, then she clasped both hands to her breast in terror, for teetering on a spray-washed rock right on the edge of the falls, stood the bearded figure of Grizzly Gallagher with the body of an otter in his hands.

Hardly knowing what she was doing, and overcome with terror that her husband would in his anger shoot the old trapper, Bonnie screamed a loud warning.

Startled at the unexpected sound, Grizzly Gallagher looked up, overbalanced, then pitched headfirst over the forty-foot falls.

Bonnie screamed again, then suddenly she jerked the rope from her husband's

hands, and the great loop circled above her head, as she waited for the old trapper's head to appear out of the depths.

An upflung arm appeared, only to go down in the suck of the caldron, then suddenly the shaggy head of the old trapper shot out of the smother of white foam.

With a prayer in her heart Bonnie sent the loop hissing out over the water —and over the head and shoulders of Grizzly Gallagher.

"I swan!" sputtered the old trapper when at last he could speak. "That sure was a close call. Don't ever scream again like that when you see a man in a dangerous place."

"What were you doing with my otter?" asked Jack Haslitt somewhat shamefacedly, "and why did you take up all my traps?"

"I've been away from my camp for several days prospecting for fur sign," said Grizzly Gallagher. "I knew you'd never catch anything around here, so I took up all your traps and changed your otter set after I found by your tracks that you had headed over to my cabin. I was thinkin' maybe you'd like to go in cahoots with me for the rest of the winter. Your wife can do the cooking."

Slowly Jack Haslitt coiled the wet lariat, while Bonnie, with misty eyes gazed across the big eddy below the falls of Seventy-six Creek.

Suddenly she ran forward and pulled from the edge of the water the glistening, black-furred body of the great otter which Grizzly Gallagher had caught.

"To bind our partnership," she whispered shyly, as she held it out to the old trapper, "I want you to keep this otter for your very own."

Grizzly Gallagher promised to keep the animal as he shook hands warmly with Jack and Bonnie.

NEW REGULATIONS FOR PROJECT SETTLERS

REGULATIONS for the selection of settlers on Federal irrigation projects in accordance with the terms of the reclamation law enacted by Congress in 1924 have been approved by the secretary of the interior and will be put into effect. The regulations provide that applicants for irrigated farms must be in vigorous health with a minimum capital of two thousand dollars or its equivalent in farm equipment or livestock, and that they must have two years actual experience in farm work.

They also provide for the appointment on each Federal reclamation project of a local examining board of three or more members, in whom will be vested the duty of selecting the best qualified applicants for all farm units available for settlement. The foregoing requirement as to capital does not apply when the farm or fractional farm unit applied for is ten acres or less in area, and the applicant can show to the satisfaction of the examining board that the development of the farm is feasible from the capital he may reasonably be expected to obtain as a wage-earner.

Pioneer Towns of the West

LOS ANGELES

by

Erle Wilson

Author of "Wichita," etc.

THE largest city in Western America is Los Angeles. This pioneer town of southern California was founded in 1781 by a small band of immigrants from Mexico, the members of which built a Spanish pueblo along the banks of the small Los Angeles River, where it flows through the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. The picturesque name of "the Pueblo of Our Lady, Queen of the Angels," was bestowed upon the new outpost. Afterward this lengthy title was shortened to "Los Angeles," meaning "the angels." A few miles eastward of the site of this Spanish settlement the brown-frocked Franciscan Fathers had established a mission ten years before. This old stone structure still stands as a famous historical landmark of the section.

Los Angeles became the largest pueblo in the territory, and in 1827 was a rival of Monterey for the honor of being the capital of California. In 1835 it was made a city by the Mexican Congress and declared the capital, but the last provision was never enforced. However, from 1845 to 1847 this ambition was realized, and it was the actual seat of government. When war broke out between Mexico and the United States, the citizens of Los Angeles were divided in their homage, the arrival of United States troops under Commodore Robert F. Stockton and General John C. Fremont causing both factions to unite against a common enemy. The defenders of the city fled before the approach of the soldiers, and on the 13th of August, 1846, the Stars and Stripes were raised over the old Spanish town.

However, the inhabitants did not meekly submit to the new régime. In the autumn they revolted, driving out the garrison of fifty United States soldiers who had been left in control of the city. It was not until General Philip Kearney and Commodore Stockton entered the port on the 18th of January, 1847, that the California town was recaptured. From this time on, American control was undisputed, and Los Angeles began to thrive. Along with other California towns its growth was stimulated by the discovery of gold on Sutter's Creek, which led to the romantic days of '49, when adventurers thronged to the region. The city was chartered in 1850, and continued to develop steadily, attaining railroad connection with the Central Pacific and San Francisco in 1876,

and with the East by the Santa Fe system in 1885.

The growth of Los Angeles has been magical. To-day, it is the metropolis of Western America, and the first city in population on the Pacific coast, having over one million inhabitants. Its situation between the sea and the Sierra Madre Heights is ideal; it is noted especially for its mild and invigorating climate.

Twenty-seven miles from the city is its harbor, San Pedro Bay, which is becoming one of the great ports of the Pacific. Over ten million dollars has been spent on dock improvements, and accommodation for ships of the largest size has been provided. The city has also built immense wharves, docks, and warehouses, with every modern facility for the quick handling of the vast tonnage which passes through the port. Sixty-four steamship lines arrive and depart regularly. Here the United States government maintains its Pacific coast submarine base and Fort McArthur, one of the most modern forts in America.

As a resort, Los Angeles stands alone among the larger cities of America. It is equally a city of home owners, offering to its citizens many advantages. The school system of this California city is one of the finest in the land, and it is also the home of the State University, as well as many colleges of national scope and renown. Numerous parks, ranging from Griffith Park, a mountain reservation of over three thousand acres, to Westlake Park, a highly cultivated spot with a lake for boating, furnish outdoor recreation. In this metropolis is found a thriving business district, lined with skyscrapers, while palatial homes dot the palm-fringed boulevards of the residence section. Modern shops, stores, markets, theaters, public art galleries, and the most up-to-date of hotels offer metropolitan accommodations alike to the tourist and the citizen.

There are many interesting things to be seen in Los Angeles. In the Chamber of Commerce Building is found an exhibit demonstrating the resources of southern California. Here also the Coronel Collection, with its relics of the days of the Spanish Don, the Palmer Collection of Indian antiquities, and the collection of the Southwest Society, preserve the past. On the edge of the city, near Eastlake Park, is the Indian Crafts Exhibition, containing rare specimens of aboriginal handiwork. Of interest to the tourist is Sonora Town, with its adobe houses, the old Plaza, and the Church of Our Lady, Queen of the Angels, which contains paintings by the Indian converts of pioneer days. Near by is Chinatown, where Oriental life may be viewed at close range.

Los Angeles lies in the midst of the richest agricultural country in the United States, the fertile soil around producing fruits and truck crops in great abundance. It is also developing rapidly into a great manufacturing center, due largely to the fact that electric power is inexpensive, and that there are no seasonal shut-downs caused by weather conditions. One of the great industries of Los Angeles is the manufacture of moving pictures, this city producing a large percentage of the world's films. The monthly pay roll of this industry is twenty-five million dollars. Always noted as an oil center, Los Angeles has recently added to its prestige in this industry by the bringing in of two great oil fields in its immediate vicinity. It is probably, also, the greatest oil exporting port in the world.

Celebrated as the playground of the world, this California city is surrounded by forty miles of beautiful ocean beaches and a great stretch of mountain ranges containing some of the highest peaks of the Sierras Nevadas. There are excellent roads throughout southern California, and the main highways radiate from Los Angeles. A short ride will

carry one to the mountains, with their trout streams, or to the camp of a national forest. Near by are found such noted resorts as Santa Monica, Ocean Park, Venice, Redondo, and Long Beach.

Hundreds of attractive motor trips may be made from Los Angeles through the orange groves to historic Spanish missions or to the neighboring cities. With an automobile to every four persons, Los Angeles is the home of the greatest automobile club in America. Catalina Island, famed for its marine gardens and big-game fishing, is only twenty-six miles from Los Angeles Harbor, and may be reached by luxurious passenger boats.

This California city is famed for the efficiency of its electric railway service, which extends to many points within a radius of seventy-five miles, and is said to be the best in the world. Transportation facilities are excellent, with the advantages of six transcontinental railway lines. The charter form of government is in effect here, the present mayor being the Honorable George E. Cryer. The municipality owns its light-and-power service, and has a most efficient fire department. Water is supplied from the Sierra Nevada Mountains, approximately two hundred and thirty miles north of Los Angeles, being conveyed to the city in a great aqueduct.

The chamber of commerce of this Pacific coast metropolis is the largest organization of its kind in the world, with fourteen large specialized departments reaching out into every branch of the city's life. To it is due the building up of Los Angeles from a small city to the fifth in population in the United States, the eighth in industry, and to one of the large seaports of the country.

In next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, Ogden, Utah, will be described.

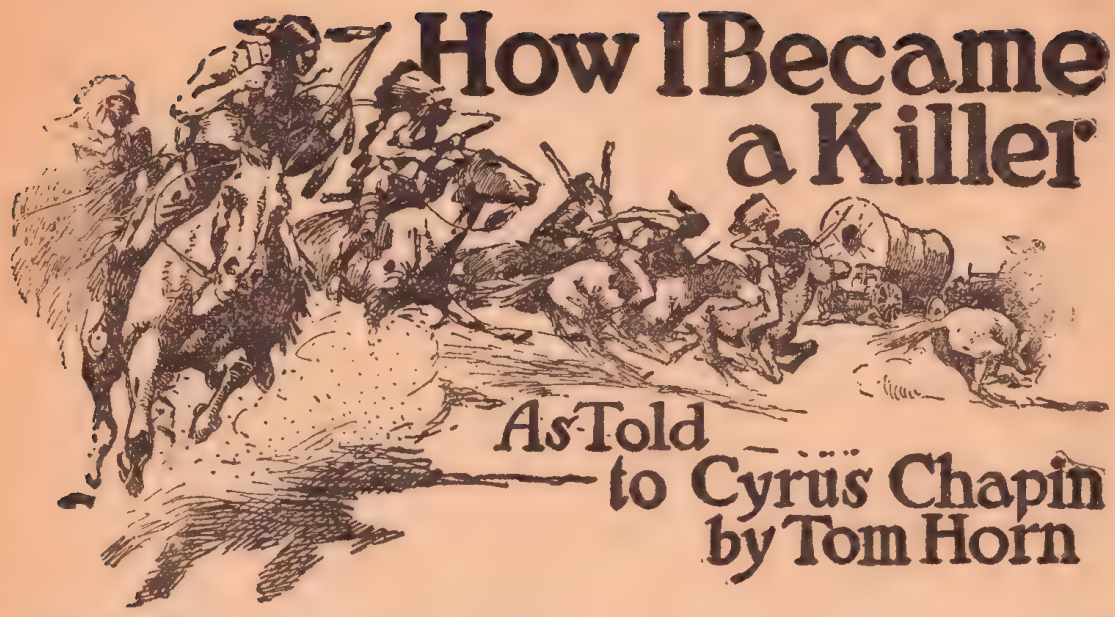
FORT ROSS TO BE RESTORED

THE State of California plans to restore and preserve as a historical monument the old landmark known as Fort Ross. This was the southernmost outpost of the Russians in the New World, and is in Sonoma County. It will be maintained as a museum of relics of the days when the Russians controlled a large stretch of territory in that region.

In the rebuilding of Fort Ross, hand-hewn timbers in the same shape and size as those used by the Russians will be used. After the fort is reconstructed, it is planned to make a wide trail to the summit of Mount St. Helena, which was named for the bride of one of the Russian commanders at Fort Ross.

ELK MAY BECOME MENACE

ACCORDING to Belmore Brown, a New York artist, who has recently returned from a painting tour of the Canadian Rockies, the elk in the Panther River country, about forty miles north of Banff, Alberta, are increasing so rapidly that they will soon become a menace. Ten years from now, in Mr. Brown's opinion, there will be ten thousand elk in that district. They are already driving out the mountain sheep and they will soon drive out other animals, until the government takes measures to reduce their numbers. This is Mr. Brown's tenth summer in the Canadian Rockies and he is regarded as an authority on the wild animals of the region. A few years ago, the elk were almost extinct on the North American continent.



How I Became a Killer

As Told to Cyrus Chapin by Tom Horn

SPEAKING of killers," said I to Tom Horn, United States Indian scout at Fort Grant, Arizona, "tell me—is a killer born or made? I am speaking of the Western type who kills in the interest of law and order, or at times, when the other man happens to try and get the drop on him."

The long, lank Missourian's black eyes sized me up to see whether this was idle curiosity or genuine interest on my part. He evidently decided it was the latter, for he told me an interesting story, which I knew to be authentic in every detail. I will try to give it in his own words. Horn had been to common school as a boy and later had read good books. He spoke better English than the average Indian scout.

"I reckon," began Horn, "there's this difference in killers. The murderer is born. The killer for law and order is made. I hope and believe I belong to the last named."

"They say," said I to stimulate him from a natural taciturnity into a talking mood, "you killed fifteen Apache braves, single-handed, before you were seventeen."

"A slight mistake," said Horn, smiling, "for there were only fourteen Apaches in that particular bunch. And —well, here's the story if you want it.

"My folks were from Missouri. Father moved us out to Arizona when I was thirteen. He was a freighter and ran teams and wagons throughout the Southwest. I made trips with him, and always liked horses—practiced shooting with old-model Winchesters and Colts. One day father and I were alone in a heavy freight wagon, with a schooner top, drawn by three teams, meaning six horses, with a trailer. I rode my pony part of the time, a little buckskin. A bunch of Apaches, fourteen in number, held us up about a hundred miles northeast of Fort Grant. I was but fourteen then, but put up the best fight I could, while several of the reds tied my father to a wagon wheel and built a fire around him."

"They didn't harm you?"

"No—that didn't seem to be their idea. They expected to use me for another thing they had in mind which comes into my story later. You've heard about the stoicism of Indians, haven't you?"

"Of course."

"Well—it is a fact. They are that way. You can't make a real brave holler. It was terrible to have my own father die that way. He was good and fine and had lots of nerve. While I struggled to break loose from the Indians who held me, I made up my mind to get 'em—every one."

"And you did?"

"I did, but not right away. It couldn't be done. What could a kid of fourteen do with a bunch of full-grown Apaches around him, and later thousands of them?

"They let me dig a grave out there on the prairie. They offered to help, but I wouldn't let them. They started southwest then toward the Mexican line with me. They drove our six horses, packed with such stuff as they wanted from the wagons before they set fire to them. They would have taken the wagons, too, but were afraid of Indian scouts from Fort Grant. It must have been in the lines of fate that we came across no scouts that day nor that night —nor any time until we reached the border and crossed it.

"Once down under the Mexican border, they eased up on the pace, and in a couple of days came to Geronimo's camp. This was the same old chief who made so much trouble for the government until a treaty was signed. At this time, when I was a kid, this old devil would run up into United States territory and kill settlers, such few as he could find, and run off bunches of cattle and horses into his stamping ground in Mexico. He kept our government in hot water all the time. Our troops could not go after him onto Mexican territory without a mix-up with the Mexican government, and all kind of tangles resulting.

"At any rate, I stayed on in Geronimo's camp. I got so I could talk fair Apache, which is to a great extent a sign language. For instance, you say 'The man is here,' or 'The man is out there,' or 'The man is away out there'—meaning miles away. The same words are used for all these expressions, but a little sign, such as the movement of a hand, or a shoulder or an arm, indicates the difference, the exact meaning—the moods, tenses and so forth. I don't know much about grammar."

"I understand what you mean. It's plain enough. Go ahead. What did you do then?"

"Well, it was soon easy enough for me to tell they wanted me to interpret for them. They wanted me to learn Apache and be one of them—in other words, a murderer and a thief. Understand, too, there are many good Indians. The Cherokees, for instance, and the Kadoes and a few others, but Geronimo's band of Apaches, several thousand strong, were cutthroats, thieves, renegades without principle. Old Geronimo kept them stirred up by telling wild tales of how the United States had cheated them, murdered their ancestors, and ruined their young men with poisoned whisky. Old Geronimo was no fighter and never pretended to be a fighter, at least among the Indians or the scouts. He was an orator, a politician, and a fine speaker in his own tongue. He liked to hear himself talk and he could talk anybody into anything. In fact, if my father had not been killed as he was, old Geronimo might have done almost anything with me, taking me as he did at that age. But hatred was in my heart —hatred for these vultures who had murdered my good, stanch father, and were going after my own people up North all the time.

"I played foxy. Although but fourteen, the tragedy I had been through, the wild men I had met, and these savages I found myself with, all tended to make me learn certain things about life, faster than the average. I plotted and planned to myself. I took every chance possible to practice shooting. I pretended to Geronimo I wanted to be an Apache and

go through the sun dance and become a regular brave."

"The sun dance?"

"Yes, it's a dance where the young bucks to be initiated must keep on their feet dancing day and night for four days and nights without water, rest or food. The older men, push sharpened thongs through the muscles of the shoulder blades, also through the breast muscles. These are tied to long ropes or strips of rawhide same as ropes. Many yards away the ropes are thrown over the limb of a tree. The ropes are then pulled. It is a hard torture to stand. The young applicant for bravedom who stands it without flinching or fainting, becomes an out-and-out brave of the tribe. The one who falls by the wayside and gives up or cries out with pain, or begs for a drop of water, is down and out as far as the tribe and the women are concerned. From that time henceforth he is nothing but a squaw, a woman, and will never be allowed to fight in their wars—and never classed as a brave.

"Finally my plan was made. I told Geronimo I had to go North and see my people. He would not let me go. He did not trust me. I ran away one night. They did not think I would run away because it was a long distance to travel and there were few trails, and these not easy to follow except for an Indian. They had brought along my buckskin pony, so while the camp slept, I got him out to one side of the camp, threw the saddle on him, and was just ready to start, when one of the Indian girls slipped up to me in the darkness. I hadn't told her anything but she knew some way or other I was running away. She brought me food to take along. I didn't have to tell her to keep her mouth shut. She would do that without any cautioning from me. She was only a kid, just my age. Maybe she loved me; maybe she didn't. Probably she did not, because we were too young. Anyway, I got away on my buckskin, and rode north, and got across the border and made my way to Fort Grant. Here because I knew a little of the Apache language, I made a hit with the chief of scouts and the colonel in charge of the fort. They let me take a good rest, and meanwhile I learned more about guns and shooting than before. The soldiers took an interest in me because I told them I was going to kill all the Indians in the bunch who did for my father.

"They laughed at this, nevertheless I knew it would come true. I knew all the fourteen men who did the deed, or helped do it. They were now in Geronimo's camp. Some time I would pick them off myself. I wanted no one else to kill them. It was my job. My father had cried out to me to avenge him, and I felt it was right to do it. It was the foremost thing in my mind. One day the chief of scouts talked to me.

" 'You are now on the pay roll of the government,' said he, 'as interpreter at Fort Grant, Arizona.'

"I said nothing, because to me the chief of scouts was greater than the President of the United States, greater, in fact, than any king in the world, or even a general in our army. I was only a boy, so all I did was listen and say a word or two when it was necessary.

" 'Your orders are,' went on the chief, 'to go back to Geronimo's camp and stay there until you learn the Apache language—finish learning it, for you have a fair start. It may take you six months, perhaps more. When you're through, return here for further orders.'

"Yes, sir," said I.

"That was all from me at the time. All I did was go and put the saddle and bridle on my buckskin, strap on a bag of feed, and some grub for myself, see that my Colts and ammunition were O. K., and away I went south again. It took me days and nights to reach Geronimo's camp, although this time I knew the trails better. Occasionally I

came to a spring where I camped and rested my pony. Sometimes it would be a small stream of water. I jogged on and at last came to his camp.

"Geronimo and all the rest of them received me as if I was a long-lost son—with this exception—Geronimo's little black eyes glittered as he tried to read me. I told him I liked living with the Indians better than with whites. At last he appeared satisfied. He thought I was all right. I made it my business to learn Apache, and as far as a white man can learn it, I probably accomplished it. This suited Geronimo and the rest of the tribe. They figured I would marry one of their girls.

"They hunted and fished within a considerable radius of the camp. The squaws as usual did all the work, except occasionally, some heavy job like lifting or carrying poles or heavy weights, was done willingly by the males. A true warrior, however, considers it beneath him to work. He must fight and hunt and bring home food for the squaws to cook, but both fighting and hunting to him are play. And, it may be noted, the squaws have a contempt for the brave who works, rather than fight or hunt."

"During this time," said I, "you did not try to kill any of the assassins of your father?"

"No, that would have been entirely impracticable. If I had tried to shoot them or otherwise do away with them in camp, I would have been caught; the cat would have been out of the bag and I would have been killed myself. I waited—waited, knowing my time would come. During the marauding expeditions which Geronimo planned for his warriors to undertake up in the border States, he did not usually go himself. He knew where cattle and horses were to be acquired, by stealing. He knew where a settlement of whites could be attacked with profit, and he kept scouts of his own going and coming into various sections. For the most part, he let the Mexicans and their ranchos and belongings alone. As long as this was his home and Mexico protected him, he had sense enough to know on which side his bread was buttered.

"One day I told Geronimo I had to go to see my folks in the north. He did not want me to go, but by this time I had such an ascendancy over the old chief, for he was always old to me, he did not try very hard to keep me. I told him maybe I could get some information from the government troops and find out what their plans were and what they were doing and going to do. He allowed his little black eyes to glitter suspiciously at this remark for a moment, and then he thought and puffed his long Indian pipe. At last he let that part of my remarks pass.

" 'You go,' " said the old chief, with a long sweep of his pipe, and an Indian sign meaning a long journey, 'and come back in a few moons.'

" 'Yes,' I replied, 'as soon as I can.' I preferred not to commit myself even to Geronimo, who was as accomplished a liar as the world has produced in several centuries.

"Accordingly, I journeyed back to Fort Grant, looking back now and then along the trails to see if I was followed by the spies of the old chieftain."

"Naturally," said I, "you were protected to an extent against arousing Geronimo's suspicions, because you had told him you might get some information for him from the United States troops."

"Exactly, that was the idea in saying what I did. When I got back to Fort Grant, which was then the army post for a certain reservation and district, I was allowed to go out with the Indian scouts to bring back Indians who strayed off of the reservation. They were not allowed by their guardians, the United States government, to go off the reservation. If they did so, they had to be

herded back by United States officers—scouts or soldiers, or both. Of course the scout was the best man to do this because he knew Indians, knew where to find them, and if anybody knew how to handle them he did. But here was a point which I have to acknowledge helped me in my learning to be a good shot, a *perfect* shot if there is such a thing as being a hundred per cent—and a *killer*——"

Horn paused an instant and again looked me over, as wondering how I, a younger man than himself, was going to take all this about killing so promiscuously. Then he continued:

"It is hard to tell whether, when I get through with this yarn, what you will think. All I ask of you is this: Remember conditions were different in the '70s and '80s. It was often necessary to use a gun. So, when the scouts, accompanied by myself who now considered me one of them, went after strayed Indians, if they did not march back quietly onto the reservation, we left them there."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning—we killed them, if they resisted. There was nothing else to do. Right then the slogan all over the Southwest was: *'There is no good Indian but a dead Indian.'* While all of us did not believe this, we did know that when an Indian resisted being taken back to where the government said he belonged, he wanted to fight, and if he did that he knew he would get killed.

"At last came my chance to get a crack at some of the gang who had murdered my father. As they came up into Arizona on thieving and killing expeditions, I took a shot at them whenever I got a chance, until by the time I was between sixteen and seventeen years old, I had dispatched the entire number, fourteen in all. Whenever I was with a bunch of soldiers or scouts, and I recognized any of that original Apache gang, I planned things so I could be the executioner. Then, and not until then was I satisfied. I still had hopes of assisting our government in getting Geronimo.

"When my orders finally came to go into Geronimo's camp and inveigle him across the border into United States territory where General Miles and his troops would have a legal and legitimate excuse for capturing the old devil, I was tickled, although I knew the job ahead of me was indeed fraught with difficulties. The old chief was suspicious, the same as any murderous crook has a right to be—no wonder, having killed and thieved all his life, or rather having made others do his dirty work for him.

"Again I took my buckskin pony and saw Geronimo and his followers. I told him a long cock-and-bull story about being north with my folks, and not being able to get away from the United States troops, because they found out I could talk Apache and made me stay on with them. Whether he swallowed this or not I don't know. Then, after a few days, I started to talk him into going north into United States territory himself. We talked in Apache.

" 'Your warriors,' said I, 'are gradually but surely being killed off by the white man. In a few short years they will all be gone, and you will die like a dog after a useless fight. Come north, anyway, and talk it over with the Great Chief of the white men. You and he are each the head of many warriors, but he has the best of you because there are millions behind him of both men and money.'

"The old fox sparred for time. He did not like giving up the free life of a renegade, and yet he knew what I said was true. At last he consented and followed me with a large band of his warriors up north into Arizona. Here I turned them over to Lieutenant Godwin of the United States army, who later brought Geronimo to the camp of Gen-

eral Miles. Some fighting occurred between United States troops under General Miles and certain bands of Apaches, but Geronimo himself took no hand in this. He was willing at last to make terms of peace with the United States government and he did so, shortly after his first meeting and conference with General Miles. From that time on, the troubles between the United States government and the Apache tribes was practically ended. For Geronimo was their leader and the principal instigator of their troubles."

"So you had quite a start as a killer," said I, anxious to lead him on to tell what happened next.

"Yes," mused Horn, "and if I do say it myself I could shoot. Why not? What else had I ever done but shoot and ride? I could ride anything on which it was possible to cinch a saddle. I could sling a rope and I knew cattle, but I did not like the cow business, nor anything else now but being an officer of some kind or other. After a few years as Indian scout, I tired of the Southwest because there got to be too much of a sameness—nothing doing. The Indians were too peaceable, and only once in a while did a man get a chance to go after some renegade who was desperate enough to make the thing interesting.

"At last I quit the government, and stayed quit until the Spanish War when —because I knew Spanish, or a Mexican jargon which passed for Spanish—knew horses, mules and such and had a good record with Uncle Sam, they made me master of pack trains for our army in Cuba. Nothing much of interest there for me. But in between the time I left Fort Grant as a scout and went to Cuba, I went to work for one of the largest police and detective organizations in the world. They had a lot of cattle work and work hunting for desperadoes out West, and they wanted a real Western gunman to do it.

"There was action in this. One time they gave me expense money enough to go to Central America after a tough nut who had escaped, and whom they wanted inveigled out of Spanish Honduras into some other neighboring State so they could extradite him. They knew if I got there, and he wouldn't come peaceably, I would at least try to pick him up and carry him to Guatamala or some place where we could get action legally. Anyway, with my roll of expense money I went into a gambling joint in Denver and commenced to play. I was a fool, I'll acknowledge that, but it was one of my falls. I seldom let myself gamble, and when I did I lost my head. This time I saw my roll slip away from me, and as I was going out of the joint, a bartender I had known in the Southwest stopped me.

" 'Tom,' said he, 'that wheel you've been playing is crooked. If you don't believe it, I'll prove it to you. I know how it's fixed. A friend of mine works for this house. The whole outfit is bad and don't know what a square deal is.'

" 'You don't have to prove anything to me, Billy,' said I, for I knew him to be truthful. 'What you say to me is all wool and a yard wide. Watch me get my money back.'

"All I did was walk up to the roulette wheel and pull my gun down on the guy who was running it. 'Hand me your roll,' said I as quiet as could be, 'and hand it over quick.'

"He must have seen by the look in my eye that I was desperate and would kill him if he did not follow orders, or if he tried to pull a gun. The same thing applied to the rest of the gang in the joint. I kept my eye roving over the whole outfit and was ready to shoot anybody, in fact several if necessary, for I was lightning with a gun. I got the money—the whole roll. I paid myself, and gave all the players around the table the rest of it. After handing my friend, the bartender, a big tip, I left the house,

and nothing ever came of it. They dared not appeal to the police; they could not stand an investigation of their methods.

"So I got my expense money, and before I had a chance to weaken again I hopped on a train and beat it to New Orleans. From there I went to Spanish Honduras on a fruit boat. I landed at Porta Cortez, made my way into the interior and found my man, the desperado. He was playing at raising bananas. I did not propose to fool with him, so when I found him in his cabin, I told him who I was.

" 'I'm an officer, and you're wanted in the United States, and I'm going to take you back there.'

"I had my gun in my hand and pointed toward him. He didn't have a chance, and he knew by sizing me up I was used to the game I was playing. However, he started to argue with me.

" 'Yes, but you can't take me back. I can't be extradited from Spanish Honduras. The United States has no extradition treaty with this country.'

" 'Listen, bo,' said I, 'all you say is no news to me—about the extradition part, but you sure are going back with me, pronto. I'm going to get you into British Honduras, and as soon as we are at Belize, the American and British consuls will fix up the legal end of this thing.'

"With that, although he cussed to beat the band, I made him walk out to a lean-to shed and saddle a couple of mules. I strapped him on one of them and made him and his mount go on ahead. We traveled over miles of mountains and through tortuous trails, until finally we came to the British Honduras border. Then I had a little rest from watching the prisoner. Some of the native constabulary helped me out. But on the way to Belize, one night, my prisoner escaped. The watch on him went to sleep, and I was awakened as the desperado tried to wriggle out of his bonds. I let him get as far as the sleeping watchman whom he tried to frisk of his gun.

" 'Hands up, pardner,' said I from my couch, and with my own pistol on him. Instead of putting his hands up as ordered he tried to make for the door. I called 'Halt!' once, but he didn't stop. Then I had to shoot him. Too bad, but it was his own fault. One shot and he fell dead, a few yards from the cabin door.

"On my return to the United States, the organization for which I worked sent me on several bad cases—that is, cases where gunmen and so-called bad men were involved. At last my bosses called me down several times for being too handy with a gun. They said I would have to stop it or get out.

" 'Trouble with you, Tom,' said one of my superior officers in the institution, 'you're used to shooting every Tom, Dick or Harry who doesn't do exactly as you think he ought to. I don't mean you kill without provocation, but this isn't the Apache country you are in. These men all have a right to a trial.'

" 'Yes, but they resist arrest, or do something else equally bad,' I insisted. 'and I never kill unless I think I'm in the right.'

" 'I know you think you're in the right,' continued my boss, 'no doubt of that, but you are entirely too handy with a gun, I'm afraid for us. You've already cost us a pretty penny getting things squared up for you on a couple of killings, although I must confess I think you were in the right. But law is law, and order is order. You'll have to be more careful, Tom.'

"Well, it appeared to me I tried to be careful, but I soon got the idea myself that this country wasn't my country. I really belonged to a place where a gun was the only law. Where should I go? What should I do?

"The organization I was with tried me on one last job, and I thought this

would surely give me plenty of what I called action. They sent me to Cheyenne, Wyoming, to get evidence against cattle thieves who were committing depredations against the ranches whose owners belonged to the Wyoming Cattle Association. I went, and with me was Charles A. Siringo, and also William B. Sayers.

"Siringo was a born and bred cowman, handy with a rope, splendid with horses, but no killer. Neither was he a coward. I could see this big difference between Siringo and myself. Charley did not believe in using a gun except as a last resort. With me it was the first. Sayers was more of an all-around man. He was no coward, nor was he a gunman. I had a great argument with Siringo and Sayers on the way to the point in Wyoming where we were to do our work. It was about killing, as a matter of course. We had gone through Cheyenne and were bent for the 'Hole-in-the-Wall' country. We had stopped at Laramie, and the three of us were having a drink in a saloon, where we expected to hear something about cattle thieves. Sayers had just finished telling Charley and me that a bartender in Harry Hines' saloon in Cheyenne had treated him in a mean way. The matter of the insult could not be taken up by Sayers because he had his work to attend to and must get in no mix-ups, so he had to let it ride. However, when he told me about it, the thing made me flare up right away.

" 'Tell you what I'll do, Sayers,' said I, 'I'll go back there to Cheyenne and kill that bartender. Nobody like that is going to insult a friend of mine and get by with it.'

" 'No, no,' insisted Sayers, seeing I was working myself into a killing heat, 'I'm sorry I mentioned it. It really don't amount to anything. Forget it.'

" 'I'll forget nothing of the kind,' said I. 'It will be an easy thing to get him. All that's necessary is for me to step up to the bar and ask for whisky. He will shove out the bottle and glass. I'll pour out a drink and toss it in his face. He will immediately start to pull a gun, and that's self-defense—excuse enough. It's all over in a second, and nobody hurt, except the snake who insulted my friend.'

"Both Siringo and Sayers argued with me for a long time. This sounds like a piece of rank foolishness, but in telling you how I became a killer, I am trying to give the entire gist of the matter. I think I'll have to confess that by this time I actually did begin to take a satisfaction in killing. But please remember this in justification to myself, I still only wanted to kill those who I thought deserved it.

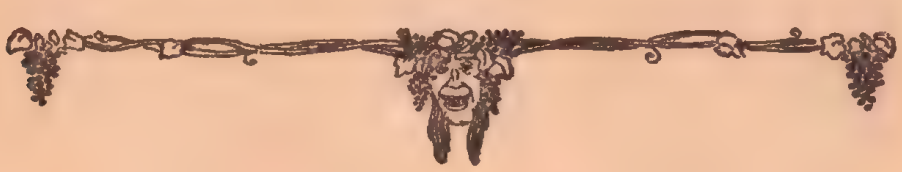
"Very well. Siringo and Sayers and I got to the Hole-in-the-Wall country. Here it was our duty to try and get evidence against cattle thieves. They were to a great extent sheepmen, but not all of them. We found some of the thieves butchering cattle. The trio of us rounded up the thieves we caught either butchering cattle or driving off stolen cattle and brought them to the nearest town where there was a court. They were tried. Many, many times our prisoners were tried and each and every time they were let loose. It became the same old story—friends or pals would come up and swear an alibi for the prisoners. This thing has happened too often in criminal and police history for me to tell you how many times it has been pulled, this alibi stunt. Well, it got my goat. It certainly made me good and tired. I said to Bill and Charley:

" 'Boys, the next time I catch a man butchering somebody else's steer I'm going to whang him one right through the heart.'

"They did not try to argue me out of this, perhaps for two reasons. It was to an extent justifiable in a country still given over to the rule of the gun to

a great degree, besides they probably knew I would shoot, anyway. I did. This was to an extent part of my learning to be an out-and-out killer. I shot several men butchering steers. I shot several men who resisted arrest when I caught them driving off cattle I knew to belong to the president of the Wyoming Cattle Association. He was a good friend of mine; he had me stop at his ranch often. He liked to hear me tell stories about Indian days and scouting expeditions.

"Nothing was done about these killings. They were legitimate—but they had to do with my killing just the same. To an extent I became a self-ordained and appointed killer of my own kind."



IMPROVEMENTS IN THE YOSEMITE

PLANS are under way for the construction of a modern up-to-date hotel on the floor of the valley in Yosemite National Park to replace the old Sentinel Hotel. With the completion of this hotel, four classes of accommodation will be available for visitors to that region, namely, hotel, bungalow, tent camp, and free public camp grounds, the latter provided by the government for campers. The accommodations are designed to appeal to every taste and to fit every pocketbook.

Road and other developments are also progressing. It was decided during the past summer to rebuild the roads into the valley on a maximum eight-per-cent grade, safe and wide.

KALAMATH INDIANS' FINANCES

THE secretary of the interior recently authorized a payment of two hundred dollars to each member of the Klamath Indian tribe on the Klamath reservation in Oregon. The total disbursement was $245,200, distributed among 1,226 Indians. The reason for making the payment was that three bad crop years in succession had seriously depleted the resources of the Indians, and that they did not have sufficient funds to harvest this year's crops. They also owed considerable money to the government in the form of reimbursable indebtedness and irrigation charges.

As a result of tribal timber sales, the Klamath Indians had $268,000 on deposit in the United States Treasury, and these sales will probably continue for twenty years longer before all the timber is disposed of. On the basis of contract now in force, approximately seven hundred thousand dollars will be received during the next year by the Indians from this source.

The Padded Trap

—By—

Paul Ellsworth Triem

Author of "Wrecked for Gold," etc.

IT was still a country of vast, solitary spaces, of cut-over lands, grown up to a dense second growth of alder and of vine maple, of swale land and hill land and rocky plain, uninhabited by man. It wasn't much of a fur country nowadays, and so "Tack" Barry, who had been a trapper all his life, was ready to testify. The winter before he had done fairly well—at any rate, he had made wages. But now, well, things had not——

"Got to draw on that bank of mine!" the old man grumbled, as he inspected with grim disapproaval an empty and apparently undisturbed set on the banks of a creek. "Darned funny, too. They was plenty of sign all fall, and every time we hev a bit of snow I can see tracks enough. Ain't no wolverine in this country to rob the traps, neither. But there's 'Johnny Sneakum.' Mought be him!"

Tack paused, his gray, keen eyes swinging slowly over the wide valley before him. It was stump land, cut over a generation ago and now grown up to a worthless jungle of bull pine and alder. It had been burned over many times; charred snags and stumps showed here and there like diabolical tombstones, commemorating the death of something infinitely evil.

"Johnny Sneakum!" Tack resumed, with a disapproving shake of his head. "He's like the good book says about pore folks—you always got him around somewheres. But I never heerd of no trap-robbing son of a gun working in these parts. I reckon they ain't nothing to it. Just a run of bad luck. Change most any time, like it always do!"

He went on to the last trap on his circuit, from which he took a prime-coated mink. It was caught by the toes, and after dispatching it with a club in such a way as not to injure the pelt, the trapper examined the set expertly. The look of dissatisfaction reappeared in his eyes.

"This varmint ain't been in here long," he commented. "No trap robber would hev lef' such a good pelt, but it mought be that they wasn't nothing in this trap when he come along. But shucks, thar I go ag'in, acting just like I believed Johnny was working in these parts when I'm close to sartin he ain't. Mos' of the folks hereabouts are ranchers, an' mighty honest folks. They ain't no Siwashes nor breeds. I reckon I been having a run of bad luck, sure, and nothing more!"

The mink was deposited in the gunny sack Tack carried slung over his shoulder, and the old man headed across a ridge for his cabin. His trap line was so arranged that the last set completed a circle many miles in circumference, and brought him close to the place where he lived. He reached his shack and kindled a fire in the rusty and knock-kneed little stove. Afterward he skinned the three skunks and the mink he had killed that day. His face was grim again, for Tack was in the trapping business as another man would be in the law—for a living. He was too thrifty to live from "hand to mouth." There was his "bank" he could draw upon, but that meant dipping into his reserve.

"It's those flivvers that has finished up the trapping," he mumbled to himself, as he thrust the mink hide on a stretcher and hung it from a beam in his shed. "Time was when a man had to go on his own legs, same as what I do now. But with these rattling, sizzling, honking contraptions that'll go anywheres a goat'll go, a lot of lazy duffers that aim to pick up a bit of easy money has got into the hills. I reckon it's time I hit the trail ag'in—North, mebbe. I've heered there is some good trapping country up whar the snow falls ten foot deep in winter, and they ain't no filling stations for five thousand miles! Yes, I reckon one of these days I'll pull up my trap stakes an' journey on!"

Tack had to visit the store in town that night. He took with him a bundle of dried pelts to exchange for merchandise, but they didn't amount to much. By the time the storekeeper had finished totaling his bill and deducting the value of the furs, Tack had to haul out his wallet and fork over a couple of dollars. Jeb Nelson, the storekeeper, regarded him quizzically.

"Kind of losing the knack, ain't you, Tack?" he suggested. "Time was when you made me fork over the difference, every trip you made into town. Now seems like I get into your wool a little deeper every clip. Or mebbe you're getting lazy in your old age—don't like to work? It ain't like you'd starve, if you didn't make a good killing every winter!"

Creases showed around Jeb's fat-incased eyes, and he chuckled. Tack Barry grinned diffidently; the old man was never at his ease in the presence of others of his kind. To-night there were half a dozen loafers gathered about the huge woodstove, with its surrounding island of sawdust, at the rear of the store. He shook his head and mumbled something about having a run of bad luck. His purchases were deposited in the canvas sack he had brought the furs in, by this time, and he shouldered the bundle and went out.

"Old curmudgeon—he don't like to hear talk about his having money!" Jeb Nelson commented comfortably. "But Tack ain't worrying none abouten the time when there ain't no varmints in these hills, except coyotes and jack rabbits. He feathered his nest back in the days when there was beaver and silver fox to be had. Sure, and he keeps the money right whar he can put his hands on it. Tack lost a couple of hundred dollars when the valley bank busted, twenty year ago, or, anyhow, that's what I've heerd. So now he runs his own bank. Got the stuff cached under the floor of his cabin, most likely. I've heerd him say, myself, that the bankers is the only folks in these parts he wouldn't trust with everything he's got! An' I don't know but what he's right. We-uns are too darned lazy to go round robbing the public!"

The idea that some one might be robbing his traps stuck in Tack Barry's mind, in spite of his efforts to dislodge it. He began studying the ground about each set, before he approached it too

closely. His eyes were the eyes of a wolf, and he knew what to look for. But if Johnny Sneakum was really working here in the cut-over lands, he must be an unusually clever individual. Tack couldn't be sure anything of the kind was going on, although his feeling of uneasiness developed into a settled conviction. Whoever it was that was robbing the traps, however, worked with uncanny skill, resetting each one exactly as it had been set before. That meant two visits—one to see how the trap was arranged, and a second to remove the fur bearer and to reset the trap. In spite of all this activity, Tack was never able to spot any one in the hills and valleys through which his line ran. He began to spend more and more time at this task, hiding in thickets, watching from ridges, studying the ground after each light snowfall for tracks.

There was something uncanny in the thing. The feeling deepened within him that he was being victimized, but he could find no tangible evidence to support this belief.

Then, one evening he tramped into his little yard, swung open the door of his cabin—and stopped, instantly aware that things were not as he had left them. The room was dark, but there was a strange scent in it which struck upon the old man's nostrils as unmistakably as snuff or asafetida. He was a smoker himself, had grown up with a pipe in his mouth, but he had never smoked a cigarette. He had no visitors. That here in the cabin some one had smoked a cigarette—there could be no doubt of it. He knew that cloying odor.

Tack advanced into the room, his head swinging from side to side, every sense on the alert. He carried no firearms except a single shot .22-caliber pistol, but the substantial club he used on the animals he caught in his traps was gripped, ready for instant use. The cabin was empty, however, as he discovered after he had lighted the tin lamp—empty, and apparently as he had left it. If it had not been for Tack Barry's hatred of cigarettes, he would not have known that the place had been visited during his absence.

As it was, he set the lamp on the table, took a second deliberate look round to be sure he had overlooked nothing. Then he went across to a short board under the slab table and lifted it out. There was a can in the hollow beneath the floor. The can looked exactly as it had when he had last visited it.

When he picked it up, he knew in an instant that he had been robbed. The can was too light—and the subsequent prying off of the tight cover confirmed this detail. There was nothing inside except a rubber band, which he had used to hold together his roll of bills.

The old man sat down beside the unlighted stove, after a time, and hauled out his pipe. Stoking it to the brim, he applied a match, tamped down the swelling coarse cut, and proceeded to fumigate the room against the after scent of his visitor's "coffin nail." His clear, gray eyes had been vaguely troubled at the beginning of the adventure; now a spark of anger was coming into them. Tack was a trustful old soul, except where financial institutions were concerned. He didn't think bankers were dishonest, but he thought they were too careless with other people's money. Now he had been careless with his own! No question about it—it is results that count, and he had been cleaned out.

"Le's see. They was close to seven hunderd in that roll. Gol-dang it all, that means I been working a couple of years to support some ornery, cigarette-smoking town Johnny."

The old man paused in his monologue. The word, Johnny, had struck a familiar chord in his brain.

"An' by heck, that ain't all the darned buzzard has stole from me!" he

added, his face twisted into a grimace of disgust. "I'll bet my coonskin cap against a fedora the same party what's been robbing my traps is the one what kem in here this afternoon and lifted my cache of money! Same kind of work—foxy as they make 'em! Waal, they is a limit to what I'll put up with. I ain't going to be no meal ticket for no hombre that smokes them things and——"

His words trailed off into silence, and he sat, puffing intermittently at the blackened briar clamped between his teeth, staring into vacancy. Finally he got up, sighed, inspected his cupboard, and began to prepare supper.

Two weeks passed before Tack said anything to any one about the robbery. There was a deputy sheriff in the little town where he did his trading, but the old trapper had scant faith in the ability of the law in such matters. One night he visited Jeb Nelson's store for his fortnightly marketing, however, and the subject came up.

Tack had ordered his groceries, and afterward deposited on the counter a slim package of furs. Nelson undid them and grunted, the indulgent smile gone from his face.

"By gosh, Tack—whar in sin did you get these here pelts?" the storekeeper demanded. "I ain't seen nothing like them for better'n five year—didn't reckon they was any such varmints lef' in the country!"

The skins were prime, thick of texture, glossy, and larger than the run of recent years. Tack Barry eyed them with mildly approving eyes.

"They ain't so bad," he admitted. "I kind of hated to kill the varmints that wore them coats—been saving 'em up, year arter year. Oh, sure, a man that's been in the business as long as me gets to know a few things he don't tell every one abouten. Fac' is, I got robbed a while back. Some two-legged coyote busted into my cabin and took what leetle money I had thar. Some wandering tramp person, I expect. An' that left me so short of spondoolicks that I hed to draw on this here bank of mine—these wild critters I been saving. There's more whar they come from. I expec' I mought just as well clean 'em up, now I'm at it. An' I guess you'll have to pay *me* for a while now, Mr. Nelson! Balance of trade setting against you, as the papers say!"

Jeb Nelson continued to admire the furs after his customer had departed. He called the loafers about the stove to see them.

"Mink, and fox—ain't been such pelts handled across my counter for many a year! Old Tack is a sly old coot. He's been kind of farming these critters, letting 'em breed, and now he's ready to kill 'em off for market! Some valley or other, fur pocket, back in the hills. Too bad about him getting robbed, though. Wonder how much the robber stole?"

Jeb's eyes wandered casually over the group before him. Most of the faces were those of old-timers in the community; gray-whiskered ranchers, who had come in "before the railroad." There was only one exception to this rule; a long-legged, bold-eyed young fellow who had a gypsyish look about him. He was a woodchopper for the hotel down in the valley, and had been a regular visitor at Jeb Nelson's store all winter.

Jeb's eyes met the eyes of the woodchopper and quickly passed on. There was in Steve Rucker's regard a mocking contempt that always made Jeb uneasy. It was none of the storekeeper's business if this young fellow who came from no one knew where, was a trifle loose in his ideas about property rights. Besides, Jeb had no proof nor even evidence.

Rucker examined the furs, his strong, brown fingers caressing the silky pelts

lovingly, a spark of covetousness coming into his sardonic eyes. He went back to his place by the stove presently, and sat there, smoking and listening, till nine o'clock. That was his usual hour for departure.

Outside the store, his expression quickly changed. A snarl came about his full-lipped mouth, and his eyes began to glow.

"The old fool—come marching in there and blat out his troubles—Nelson gave me a hard look when I was looking at them pelts! Wonder where he picked them up? If there are many like the pack he brought in to-night he had——"

The woodchopper's thoughts took a new turn. He began to speculate on the probable value of the fur pocket old Tack Barry had decided to tap. If the furs were all like the ones he had brought in this evening, the value might easily run into big money. If the trapper had learned his lesson, the money he got for them would not be so easily picked up by the simple process of house robbery.

Gradually the look in Steve Rucker's face became purposeful and determined. Since helping himself to Tack's cache of currency, he had been rather neglecting his former profitable activity as a trap thief. The old man had used this freedom from surveillance to good advantage, had penetrated to some hidden fastness of the hills, and had begun to bring out this wealth of rich furs.

"Drawing on his bank, is he? All right—but I'll just see to it that I get my percentage," the young fellow muttered. "I'll clean up on him, and take myself off. I'm getting sick of work!"

He made his way to the shack above the hotel and was quickly asleep. Dawn found him far afield; he knew the habits of the man he had set himself to outwit. He hid himself in a gully, choked with underbrush, past which Tack Barry would have to go in his journey into the hills. Nearly an hour went by before the old man's footsteps were audible, shuffling along the steep path. The trap thief let him get a safe lead, then fell in behind.

It was a long hike the two men made; dawn had changed the eastern sky from steely gray to rose, from rose to shimmering gold long before they reached the tucked-in valley, far to the south, for which the old trapper was headed. Steve Rucker, sneaking along through the second growth behind, felt his heart pounding with triumph as he stood hidden in a tangle of stunted fir and watched the old man, now diminished in size by distance, bobbing about in the draws and swales of the hidden valley. Evidently he was in luck again, for his sack as he came toward the watcher was heavy and bulging.

He paused, not far from where Rucker was stationed, and examined ponderingly a little twist in the creek that watered the valley. Presently he set down his sack, reached far down into it, and hauled out a trap. This he set in a thicket easily visible from the ridge. Afterward he stood back and examined his handiwork, nodded his grizzled head, resumed his burden, and continued his backward journey. The man who had accompanied him on this long trek let him set the pace this time. Rucker followed a long way behind, and eventually took a short cut across to his own shack. His reckless eyes were glowing with triumph.

The remainder of the day found him idling on the little lean-to porch of his cabin, for he had scant appetite for work now that he had come into possession of Tack Barry's money, and the furs he had stolen from the old trapper. The money he had hidden in a safe place; nothing so obvious as the trapper had chosen. The furs were baled, such of them as were dried, for easy transportation out of the country when

Rucker should have finished up his work of thievery.

He made up his mind as he loafed about the little house to-day that another two weeks, at the outside, would see him headed for the city. Judging from the size of the trapper's catch today, as indicated by the bulging sack on his shoulders, the hidden valley would soon be harvested of its fur bearers.

"And if he gets another hide that's worth two bits, I hope I choke!" the trap thief added in a growling undertone. "I've let him get away with too much now."

He was afoot while the stars were still clear and bright in the blue black of the night sky. His natural sense of direction made it easy for him to find his way back across the hills and valleys of the logged-off lands. As the eastern horizon was again paling, he came down a steep declivity and into the great bowl where Tack Barry had set his traps. Rucker headed for the set he had seen made—the one on the banks of the little stream. He walked cautiously now, his eyes alert, his ears strained for the faintest sound. It was possible the old man would be hiding, but in that case, his misfortunes would be only augmented. Rucker let his hand rest reassuringly on the bulge of his revolver, hidden by his coat. He had had occasion to use that weapon before, in his adventures; he would not hesitate to shoot the old man down if he tried to protect his property.

For a time he searched in vain for the exact spot where the trap had been set. It was somewhere on a turn in the creek, but the creek was full of sudden twists and angles. The trap robber finally stood still and took time to orient himself, by observing the place where he had stood while he was watching Barry set the trap, and other landmarks he had fixed in his mind at that time. Turning to the left, he made his way cautiously along the bank, peering ahead into the brush.

Suddenly he stopped, his hands involuntarily clenching themselves. Directly before him, projecting from a tangle of alder, he saw the brush of a fox, silver-gray, a great plume.

With a snarl of triumph and greed, Rucker sprang forward. He knew from the way the brush lay along the ground that the animal was dead. At the time this made no particular impression. Forward—his hand was outthrust to separate the bushes——

A yell of rage and pain shattered the dewy silence of dawn, as Steve Rucker threw up his arms and tried to jerk himself free from the thing that had closed about his ankles; a nerve-shattering something that seemed grinding the ankle bones to splinters. He sprawled forward to hands and knees, moaning, half fainting. His groping fingers came into contact with the padded jaws of the bear trap into which he had stepped. He twisted at it, but the pain in his ankles was so terrible that he quickly desisted, and for a few moments crouched, face convulsed, shoulders heaving.

After a time he mastered this first panic of pain and surprise. He straightened to a kneeling posture and began to examine the trap. It was a huge affair, with double spring and massive jaws. The latter had been wound over and over with rags and burlap. Rucker grated out a curse. It flashed into his crooked brain what that meant. This mighty mechanism of steel had been set for him—had been set just where he would have to step in approaching the trap!

He seized the chain attached to one of the side springs and jerked at it. It was anchored, solidly, as he might have known. Next moment, in a sort of afterthought, he turned painfully and stretched out his arm to where the brush

of the silver fox projected from the tangle of bushes. He jerked it toward him—the pelt of an animal which had been dead these many months. His mind was working with lightning speed now, and he saw through the old trapper's scheme. Tack Barry had resorted to the weapon he was most familiar with; the tools of his trade. Probably all of the pelts he had displayed at the store recently were part of an old cache. The entire story of the mysterious fur pocket was a lie.

A twig cracked on the hillside; the man in the bear trap twisted with a mutter of pain and stared up. Some one was coming toward him through the bushes; the figure of his adversary in this battle of wits, he perceived. His hand slid under his coat and came out, armed with the revolver. His lips drew back from his teeth, and his eyes began to glow with suppressed ferocity. With bated breath he watched Tack Barry shuffle down the old cattle path and come to a stop twenty feet away, a slow grin on his ancient, weather-beaten face.

"By gosh, I cotched him!" the old man said aloud, but apparently to himself. "Johnny Sneakum—the meanest varmint that ever got turned loose in the hills. Fleas ain't so bad; a skunk has got his fine points, and a weasel does some good, killin' off wood rats. I've knowed folks that said a coyote paid his board, more or less. But a low-down, ornery trap robber—for two cents I'd just blaze away at this here one with my pocket pistol. Reckon it'd take some time to massacree him, but I got all the time there is!"

The man in the trap mastered his pain sufficiently to let a faint sneer appear about his trembling lips. He stared unwinkingly at the old trapper. With a sudden flip of his hand, he threw up the hidden revolver and aimed it straight at Tack Barry's heart.

"Think so, old man?" he said, snarling. "Well, I'm ready. You shoot first, or try to! I've got you covered. And now just get busy and help me out of this trap. I'm going to kill you for it."

Tack regarded him through faintly disapproving eyes.

"Put down that gun," he commanded. "It might go off, an' then where would you be? Stir up your brains, you feller. You're hid in the brush ten mile from the nearest cabin. No one ever comes hyar, seeing as there ain't no fish in the creek an' no game in the hills. All been killed off by the lazy galoots in flivvers that used to come out from town. No one ever comes nigh here. That's why I picked out this cove for my set. I knowed you'd pull a gat when you and me had this leetle talk. And I wanted to be able to show you just what you was up agin'!"

The old man's words were simple enough, but back of them was a sinister implication that brought Steve Rucker's heart pounding into his throat. The gun in his hand sagged, and he stared through glazed eyes at his enemy. It was true.

"Take you some time to bump off, held the way you be!" Tack continued thoughtfully. "If you was a mush rat, now, or any other kind of gnawing varmint with the right kind of courage, you could chew yourself out an' hobble home on your stumps. A wild critter'll do it, sure enough. But you—you sure would have a great old time.

"Thirst. That'd be a lot worse than hunger. I've heerd folks that know say a man don't notice hunger much, if he's hurt bad and lost in the hills. He kind of forgets to be hongry. But thirst—that's different. Pretty soon you'd begin to talk, and then to shout. You'd get out of your head a leetle at a time, and once in a while your mind would kind of straighten up and you'd think some one else had been doing all the begging and the yelling.

"But thirst—burning thirst—and your ankles would begin to swell, where

the trap grips 'em! I got it padded so's it wouldn't bust your bones. Ever have a toothache, young feller? Sure, most folks have. Well, multiply it by about a thousand, and you got some idee how it feels to be caught in a trap and held there. I got both thumbs into a wolf trap once, and I know. And all the time *thirst*——"

With a start as if some one had pricked him with a needle, Steve Rucker realized that he was already thirsty. Less than ten feet away he could hear the gurgle of the stream, and the sound stirred something uncontrollable in his brain.

"Quit your croaking, you old crow!" he shouted. "Take my hat and fill it with water. My mouth is dry as powder; I'm on fire inside! And get me out of this——"

He paused abruptly, conscious of the shaking of his voice. He stared through burning eyes at the tranquil old man, who had now seated himself on a boulder and was filling his pipe.

"I ain't going to get you out—now nor no other time!" Tack Barry commented, as he finished stoking his pipe and applied a lighted match to it. The match flame wavered up and down, in time with the old man's vigorous puffs. His lean cheeks were sucked in at each inhalation. "No, I ain't never going to get you out. As a matter of fact, by the time you get out of there I'm going to be a long ways from here, and going strong. It ain't that I'm afeerd of you, young feller. You can see how much scared I be. But you an' me don't go at things the same way, and I'm kind of scared I mought get peevish and bump you off. So I'm going away, yes going——"

With a quavering scream the man in the bear trap again threw up his revolver.

"Just try it—take a step and see what happens!" he screamed, his voice febrile, his face convulsed.

The trapper regarded him with narrowed eyes. Slowly he shook his head.

"You couldn't hit me now, if you was to try!" he commented. "Want to gamble on it? You should have blazed away first thing, an' not let me talk you out of the notion—that is, if you really wanted to plug me. Now you couldn't hit a pianer box. I'm old and kind of wizened. Take a good shot to hit me most any time. Look at the way your hand is shaking! An' then, of course, if you *was* to get me, they wouldn't be nothing for you but just to take your medicine—thirst, and delirium, and such!"

He paused. The revolver was lying limply in Steve Rucker's lap. His eyes were wide and anguished.

"For heaven's sake, don't leave me here to die!" he cried.

"No need of quotin' the Bible," Tack Barry commented reprovingly. "It ain't hardly fittin', you being such a goldarned sneak. And it ain't necessary. I figure on sending some one in here to turn you loose, perviding you tell me whar you've cached the stuff you stole from me. And don't try no shinanigans, because I'm giving you just one chance and I'm not coming back for no more palavers. Get that through your crooked head right now!"

Rucker's chattering jaws framed an acceptance of this ultimatum.

"I'll tell you the truth! You'll find the pelts curing in a shack down near the iron springs—an empty shack. They're all stretched, except the ones I've baled. Those are in the little room above the ceiling. And the money I stole from you is in a coffee can, right near the top of a pile of old cans out behind my shack. The only coffee can in the pile——"

Tack Barry nodded, mild approval in his face.

"I knowed you'd hide the stuff so's it wouldn't be easy to find," he commented. "Well, I'll be ambling along.

If I find it just as you say, I'll send a couple of fellers out here."

"Don't leave me! I swear I'll do just as you say. Help me out of this——"

The old man shook his head, his face unyielding.

"Nothing doing, kid. You bucked into me, and I took you on without no ifs. I could of squawked to the sheriff, and he'd have tried to find my money. But you and me played this thing according to our own idees. Mine was to let you pay your way out of that there bar trap—which you're a-going to do! If you ain't lied about the stuff you stole——"

"I've told the truth, so help me!"

"Well, it won't take me more'n a few hours to find out. An' if you have, I'll have a couple of fellers out here to turn you loose. Now just toss me that thar leetle shooting iron of yourn. Come across quick! That's more like it. And now your hat!"

Too thoroughly bewildered and cowed to understand the purpose of the latter command, the trap robber obeyed. Tack Barry pocketed the gun, after eying it disapprovingly; then picked up the robber's felt hat, shuffled with it to the creek, and filled it with water. Returning, he handed it grimly to the man who had tried to despoil him of his money and his furs.

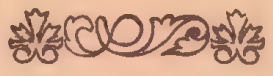
"There you be, sonny!" he concluded. "Have a drink now and take good care of the rest. It'll last you till noon. By that time you'll be out of here and hobbling back to town, if you ain't tried no monkey work on me!"

Rucker thrust his face into the cool little pool in his hat. He drank long and avidly.

When he looked up, eyes dull with the sense of utter defeat, he saw the figure of the old man who had mastered him, shuffling up the trail leading out to the barren valley.

HIS ALASKAN BAR HIS COFFIN

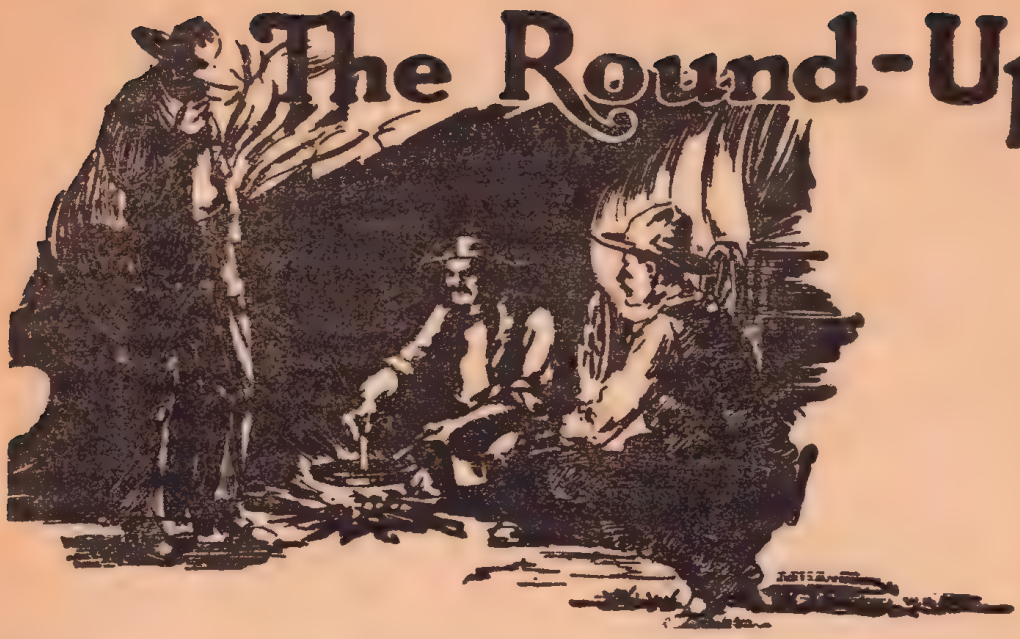
AFTER an illness of three years, Barney Gibney, aged sixty-nine, a sour dough of the Dawson, Yukon River, Nome, and Teller gold rushes, died at Nome, Alaska, a few weeks ago. His coffin was fashioned from the mahogany bar of the Gold Saloon in Dawson, of which he once was proprietor. Gibney was known as one of the most benevolent men in the Northland. He preserved the mahogany bar after prohibition put his saloon out of business and expressed the wish that it be made into a coffin.



OZARKS NOT REAL MOUNTAINS

THE Missouri State board of agriculture has recently eliminated the word "mountains" from its publications, when speaking of the Ozark area or plateau. As a matter of fact, there is not a hilltop in the Ozarks that reaches an altitude of two thousand feet above sea level. It is thought that the term "Ozark Mountains" has done the region a lot of harm in giving prospective visitors a wrong impression of the country; hence the new policy on the part of the Missouri State board of agriculture.

The Round-Up



FIRST off we want to thank you folks, and there sure were a fine big, representative crowd of you, who took up our suggestion about giving WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE as a Christmas present to one of your friends. A lot of the folks thought so well of this plan of solving the what-will-I-give-him-or-her holiday conundrum that they made a subscription to their favorite magazine the gift that several of their friends will receive from them fifty-two times during the coming year.

We want you all to know that we felt very diffident week before last, bashfullike, when we mixed up business with pleasure here in our meeting at the Round-up. Course, we are all set up and pleased, more than that, just plumb delighted to think that so many of you thought so well of the magazine that you would give it to your friends for a Christmas present. Our subscription department is sure doing a rushing business, and will be hard at it, right up till the twenty-fourth of December. And it is making special efforts to get off all Christmas subscriptions so that they will arrive on or before the day of days.

Again we thank all of you who have used and all of you who will use WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE as a Christmas present.

Now we're goin' to be told by V. W. B., of Kenton County, Kentucky, how to *shoot* a crow. You will remember that one of you recently asked how to catch one alive and really make it talk.

"BOSS AND FOLKS: I noticed in a recent issue about crows being hard to shoot. I admit that they are, but I've shot a few. A farmer told me to mount a horse, and ride right up to 'em. I found from experience that their breast feathers turn shotgun pellets. I shot them going away from me, and they dropped, but still had plenty of life left. I used a number six shot and got a big hawk, too, with the same size shot. The hawk measured four and a half feet across the wings.

"Now as to authors, my favorites are: Brand, Horton, Gilbert, Pierce, Conrard, Baxter, and Lathrop. Three cheers for WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, and may she live long with plenty of dog and horse stories."

Back to horse ag'in. Just Slim, "From Ole Virginny," he has this to say:

"BOSS OF THE ROUND-UP AND FOLKS: Hope you will all excuse an ornery cuss from Ole Virginny for busting in on The Round-up, but it just can't be helped. I have been reading WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE for four years off and on, and the worst piece I ever read was Mabel Wheelock's piece. I've been around horses about seven years, and have handled very nearly all kinds, but I never had to use anything but the snaffle bit, and I have busted a few bad ones, and have been busted a few times. I've been wondering where Miss Mabel got that stuff about being boss that a way. Mabel, you may have trained quite a lot of horses and dogs. So have I broke a lot of hosses and met with all kinds, and I never had to whip and tear the mouths all to pieces to learn them who was boss.

"Well, I guess this is all I have to say, so I'll roll me one and stand back for the next gent. I hope I have not intruded into your peaceful company."

A little ropin' talk will now be given by Orval Garnes, Asheville, North Carolina:

"BOSS AND FOLKS: I have been a silent reader of the WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE ever since I picked up a copy at Silt, Colorado, about three years ago. That was in the Cactus Valley, about eighty miles above Grand Junction, near Glenwood Springs. When I hear what Mr. Catlin says about trick roping, I just can't keep quiet any longer.

"It was at Fort Smith, Arkansas, where I first saw trick roping at the rodeo. They called it 'The Round-up.' When I came home that evening I tried my luck with the rope, and did very well until dad came out after a bucket of water and found that the well rope was missing.

"Dad being a traveler, we moved to Colorado. There I learned to skip the loop, and do the two stunts that Mr. Catlin spoke of—stepping in and out of a horizontal loop, and bringing it up over my head, et cetera. While in Colorado, I saw the fancy horse catching done at Glenwood Springs. I set my head to learn it, which I did about two months ago.

"I use a No. 12 spot-cord rope, which, I think, proves the most satisfactory. I find that skipping a loop—say about ten feet in diameter while it spins vertically—is very difficult for me to do without a 'handu,' for the weight of the hand makes the loop perfectly round, but a horizontal loop spins better without a 'handu.'

"If any of you intend to learn the art of trick roping, remember to get the right rope; then set your head to learn it. Practice makes perfect. You will notice your improvement every time you practice. Practice one trick at a time until you master it. Two hours a day is reasonable time. It only took me two hours a day, six days a week for two months to learn the last trick, which was that fancy horse-catching loop. Four weeks ago my trick rope, chaps, hat, and outfit won me a job advertising a movie show.

"I would be pleased to hear from any of you Round-up folks, especially Mr. Catlin. I have been wondering how he can take those two fifteen-foot ropes, same size, and jump through one and keep it from getting tangled up with the other; haven't you?

"If I come up some Saturday without fifteen cents to purchase my WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, and no way to get it, I am liable to take dad's old single-action Colt and stage a newsstand holdup.

"My hat is off always to good old W. S. M."

Here's some shootin'. A man who signs himself O. K., P. O. Box 294, Fort Myers, Florida, fires this:

"Boss of The Round-up and Folks: I am a regular reader of Western Story Magazine, and don't think it ever has been beat, whether it can be or not. I've noted many different views and opinions in it on guns, especially automatics, and now Friend Buckley adjusts his telescope sights and takes a long-range crack on the army Colt .45. Me being from where I am, of course what *I* say won't carry far with Western cow hands and the like. Still, I have my ideas, and *some* gun experience. Thirty years ago every one here toted them regular. I started getting acquainted with them as soon as I quit dresses. The best shooting hand gun I ever owned was an 'army special' Colt .38 side wheeler, six-inch barrel.

Concerning automatics, I'd remark this: I had three years' experience with them in the army, twelve months of that in France with the Thirtieth Division, 'Old Hickory.' Any man that likes life ought never to get caught in a jam with nothing to get out with but an automatic. The German Luger 9 M-M is the best of them, and it isn't its master's friend. The army .45 certainly is a hard hitter when it acts up all right, but for accuracy it ain't there, not any. Some of them will hit the spot some of the time —close up—but none of them will hit all the time. That horse that got his neck broken at eight hundred and twelve yards was just in hard luck, because that shot couldn't possibly be anything but a very rare accident, no matter how good a marksman the man behind the gun was. A person toting an automatic is dangerous, even if he is your best friend. I saw an army .48 empty itself through the end of its holster while we were 'up the line' in France. Spring steel may break any time without cause. No factory will guarantee any class or grade against breakage. The trigger spring of this gun broke while I was carrying it in a leg holster, and the gun dug a miniature well in the ground.

"A couple of questions from friend Hammet, Mansfield, I can answer. I ran a gallery a little while, and can do a little trick shooting with a rifle. The man that trained me always shot with both eyes open. W. F. Cody, 'Buffalo Bill,' was the only man I ever saw could beat him, and William never shut one eye to shoot. I've tried shutting one eye, but could always do better with both open. No, there isn't a rifle chambered for .45 Colt cartridges, but you can send a smaller-caliber gun to the factory and get it rebored for them at a cost of about twelve dollars, plus shipping charges.

"Well, good night, folks. I'll wait and see what you think of this one before I sling my rope again. Glad to answer any questions about Florida or the Seminole Indians, as I know both."

IMPROVING THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL

THE Lincoln Highway and the National Old Trails have their adherents, but there are also a number of travelers by auto who maintain that the Old Spanish Trail, the southernmost route across the continent beats all the rest. This trail is continually increasing in popularity, and is constantly being improved. One of the latest improvements is the eliminating of curves, the widening of the roadbed, and the cutting down of grades between Tombstone and Bisbee, Arizona. The extension of the paving along this section will remove the only bad spot between Rodeo and Yuma.

Miss Helen Rivers, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Rivers will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Letters will be forwarded direct when correspondents so wish; otherwise they will be answered here. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Hollow Tree.

A HOLLOW TREE sister who believes every one should have a hobby, and thinks many people have, suggests that you Gangsters write The Tree about yours. Perhaps you are an amateur photographer or gardener; you may raise rabbits or collect stamps or do some sort of art work. Again your hobby may be any number of things not mentioned here. It is quite likely some of you have a quite original one to tell us about. So get out your hobbies and give them an airing; we'll be listening.

Meanwhile, perhaps we'd better read out some of those letters. Texas Evelyn has some information to give about the Lone Star State.

DEAR GANG: I am an eighteen-year-old Texan, born and raised in this State. When a little girl I heard from my grandfather many stories of his life as a cowboy, when he rode the Kansas Trail; he used often, too, to sing some of the cowboy songs of his young days. Let me pause here to say, in my request for correspondents, that letters from any persons who may have known him, will be very welcome. His name was C. H. Hines; I think his people were from Virginia. Also, if any one has the words of the song "The Spotted Fawn," I'd appreciate it very much if they'd send them to me.

Texas, as you know, is the largest State in the Union. The city in which I live, San Antonio, is the largest one in Texas; Austin is our capital.

San Antonio is often called the Alamo City, as it was built around the famous old mission, the Alamo, the scene of a very bloody battle between a handful of Texans and an army of Mexicans, in our battle for independence.

Texas has a very uncertain climate. This has been an unusually dry year. Usually by the first of April the fields are as blue as the Texas skies, with the State flower, the blue bonnet. These flowers thrive in southwest Texas. In the eastern part of the State, where rains are much more frequent, flowers and fruit grow abundantly. In this part of the State it is very mild. Last Christmas the holiday buyers walked through the stores, fanning as they selected gifts.

Swimming season opened in the southwest the first of March this year. I do not like the southwest as well as the northeast part of the State. It does snow a little up there sometimes—but down here! Why, San Antonio would think the world was coming to an end.

Eastern Texas is beautiful. Here we find the evergreens. The entire country seems to be one great, wonderful pine forest. In the winter it is cold enough to make the swaying pines cause a cheerful crack, crack of ice

breaking as the wind blows through the treetops. However, it seldom snows.

I envy the young people of the North their winter sports and hope for many letters from that section, as well as other parts.

My grandmother used to live on a ranch, and I often spent part of my vacation with her. Of the numerous horses there a small bay, wiry and tough, a real cow pony, was my favorite. I would dash madly through the pastures mounted on Triple, who, whenever she saw a cow, proceeded to chase her to the corral.

The ranch was just like the ones you read of, with cattle, cow ponies, corrals, mesquite bushes, chapparal, and burning sand in some sections, rocks in others, bunch grass, and cactus. Cactus has beautiful flowers and a fruit something like pears, except that they are red and covered with a fuzzy-looking something, which close examination reveals as very small thorns. The leaf also has quite a few small thorns. Nearly all of the native plants down here are thorny. I'd be glad to send a few samples to any of the Gang who write as a souvenir of the Lone Star State.

TEXAS EVELYN.

Care of The Tree.

Want to please that friend of yours this Christmas? Send him a Hollow Tree badge and make him one of us.

Twenty-five cents in stamps or coin sent to The Hollow Tree, Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, will bring you either the button style for the coat lapel, or a pin. In ordering be sure to state which you wish.

Howdy, Old-timer. Come right up to the fire, and join the powwow.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I have spent my time in traveling around this planet of ours. I have been a prospector, miner, mucker, chucktender, fire patrol for U. S. loggers, watchman, poultry and rabbit breeder, also raised dogs, foxes, ducks, and geese. I have my own little place not very far from here.

I see that some boost California, the land of perpetual sunshine, et cetera. I was in that State before the earthquake for over thirteen years, traveled afoot, not by railroad nor auto, and if there's any one who wants to know the real truth about anything let him write me. I will tell him anything about any of the counties. Can give information about most every State in the Union, Mexico, and Canada up to the Peace River country, also Alaska and Europe.

I am middle-aged, so this won't be any kid talk, and I will answer every letter.

M. V. WEBER.

R. 1, Box 82 B, Manette, Wash.

DEAR GANG: My wife and I are over sixty years of age. We have a fine home in the Ozark Mountains, near Hot Springs, Arkansas. We have more fruit and good eats than we know what to do with; we hatch and sell chickens.

We need a young, energetic couple who are not afraid of work; to the right parties the possibilities are excellent. Would like to hear from any of the Gang who are interested.

J. F. GALLAGHER.

Care of The Tree.

All off at Hannibal, Missouri! View the principal spots of interest with Missouri Sister as capable guide!

DEAR MISS RIVERS: My home is near Hannibal, the town made famous by the celebrated writer, Samuel Clemens, or Mark Twain, as he is better known to the world. I am also near Florida, Missouri, his birthplace.

In Hannibal many statues, buildings, and other things have been preserved in Mark Twain's memory. Perhaps the most famous is the Mark Twain Cave, owned now by Mr. Cameron, a Hannibalian. This cave was made famous by the adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn; it is exactly as described in the books. My favorite corner is the narrow passageway where Tom and Becky Thatcher were marooned for the two or three days and nights, although many people prefer Straddle Alley, a deep gulch about a foot and a half wide.

Another cave has been found recently a few miles from the Mark Twain Cave, by the son of Mr. Cameron; it is called the Cameron Cave. Many think it much more beautiful than the other, but it can never be so interesting because it will never have the history back of it that the Mark Twain Cave has.

There is a printing office on the second floor of the north Main Street building in Hannibal, where Mark Twain started to work. George A. Mahan, lawyer and philanthropist, with his wife gave Mark Twain's boyhood home to Hannibal as a permanent

memorial to its world-honored citizen. The home is situated on Hill Street and is preserved to-day, just as it was in the writer's early boyhood days.

Other places of interest in Hannibal are: the home of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain playgrounds, and Riverview Park, where a large statue of the writer overlooks the Missouri River.

I should enjoy writing to sisters in this and foreign countries. For many months I have been a silent admirer of The Tree, but never until to-day have I had courage to ride by and drop in a note. I am a sophomore in high school and have recently passed my fifteenth milestone.

MISSOURI SISTER.

Care of The Tree.

"I was born and raised in the wild and wooly. Since I joined the navy, have been awfully lonesome. Won't some brothers write? I'll answer all letters. Will be in Australia when this reaches you." This lonesome sailor is H. S. Jacoby, folks; address mail to him in care of U. S. S. *Somers*, Postmaster, San Francisco, California.

"Will some of you experienced hands with horses give me some advice on how to break a horse of a very bad trick? He's a mustang who was caught in Nevada when about a year old, and is very small and 'ornery.' He has the habit of laying back his ears, baring his teeth and trying to stamp on you or kick you when you try to catch him." This request comes from California Callie, who promises information about California in return for advice on horses.

Alice Terry, of Delevan, California, is a lonely farmer's daughter, who hopes to get "a flood of letters."

Here's another lonely country girl, Mildred Holmes, Box 26, Youngsport, Texas. She's interested in books, outdoor sports and kodak pictures.

Dick of Pennsylvania says: "It's myself that is a mighty friendly sort and takes kindly to new friends. So come on, all of you good scouts, and write me a line. I'll answer every one of you; am an optimist and expect a heavy mail." Send letters in care of The Tree, brothers.

"I live in the flour city of the world and will exchange information about Minnesota with girls from other States," writes Theresa Gates, 902 N. 5th Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"We are fourteen-year-old twins, fond of outdoor sports, such as swimming, hiking and riding. We live on a farm twelve miles from Frederick. Will sisters our age from all parts of America write Jessie and Dessie McCollum, Route B, No. 56, Frederick, Oklahoma?"

TRAILED BY MOUNTAIN LION

A FEW weeks ago, Mat Scott, of Marysville, California, had the exciting experience of being trailed for a considerable distance along a lonely road by a mountain lion. Scott was returning home after dark, when he heard stealthy movements in the brush beside the road. Investigation showed a mountain lion a short distance away. Scott threw some large stones at the animal, and it disappeared; but as he proceeded along the roadway, he again heard the rustling in the brush and concluded that the lion was continuing to follow him. He reached his home without mishap and in the morning measured the tracks which he found paralleling the road. They indicated that his pursuer of the previous night had been a mountain lion of unusual size.

Where To Go and How To Get There

By John North

It is our aim in this department to be of genuine practical help and service to those who wish to make use of it. Don't hesitate to write to us and give us the opportunity of assisting you to the best of our ability.

Address all communications to John North, care of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

DIPPING INTO THE MAIL BAG

MY mail bag is still full to the top with letters from boys, young and old, who want to do anything and everything that will take them out of the cities, and keep them away from the smoke and noise of factories and workshops. Well, I, for one, don't blame them for that, and I am only sorry that it is not in my power to find good jobs for them all. Nothing would please me better. In order to do that, even for one half of those who seem to think that I can place them just where they want to go, I should have to run a pretty complete employment bureau, and this is something that is not in my line. However, I am always glad to give advice, and perhaps some of my readers may be able to solve the problems of our back-to-the-country comrades who ask how to set about it through this department.

Here's a letter from a chap who

WANTS TO BE A LUMBERMAN

DEAR MR. NORTH: I am writing for information in regard to work with the lumber companies in the Western States. Could you give me the names and addresses of some of the companies in which I might find work? I am twenty-three years of age, single, with high school and business college education, but would accept any kind of work in the Western States. M. C. MOORE.

Robstown, Texas.

I don't give names or addresses of lumber companies or ranches, because these concerns do not employ men by mail, and do not want to be bothered with such applications. The best way for an outsider to land a job of this kind is to go to the State that he decides upon, get the newspapers, read over the help-wanted columns, and apply in person. Or look up the employment bureaus that make a specialty of handling workers for the lumber companies. And it must be borne in mind that only the physically fit are wanted.

This one comes from an ambitious young fellow who would like to see himself in a scarlet coat, riding over the plains on a spirited horse to get his man.

WANTS TO JOIN THE MOUNTIES

DEAR MR. NORTH: I long for the great outdoors. Will you please give me the qualifications necessary to become a Northwest Mounted Policeman? E. L. C.
Fort Smith, Ark.

This looks easy, but it isn't. We have seen heroes in the movies who just walk into the commissioner's office, get accepted on their looks, presented with the finest mount in the service, and sent off, there and then, on a thousand-mile jaunt to get a man who has eluded the most persistent efforts of all the old-timers for months and months. And the hero gets him, every time! Yes, sir! It wouldn't be a movie if he didn't. This doesn't happen in real life, as our friend will find out if he ever tries to join up.

Well, sir, here are the qualifications: First, you must be a British subject, single, between eighteen and thirty-five years old, five feet eight inches tall, at least, and not more than 175 pounds in weight. That is all. If you measure up to these, you can make your application to the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police at Ottawa, then you wait, and wait, and *wait* until all the others who have been waiting ahead of you—and the list is a long one—have had their turn. If you don't get tired of waiting, you may some day wear that uniform. Then again you may not.

Here is a letter that is typical of hundreds that make my mail bag bulge year in and year out. Two young chaps would like to get

A JOB ON A RANCH

DEAR MR. NORTH: I would like to get a job on a ranch somewhere in Texas. I and my buddie are willing to do any kind of work with horses. I have labored on a farm and am no green hand with horses. Please try to find a rancher who wants two boys, and send his name to me. We are two good workers. Please do this as soon as you can.
BERNARD WILHELM.
College Corner, Ohio.

As I have said many times in this department, I cannot give addresses of ranches to boys who are anxious to become cowboys. This is almost as tough a proposition as getting into the "Mounties." Most cowboys are born and brought up on ranches and learn the business as other boys learn roller skating or bicycle riding, by seeing others do their stunts and taking a hand once in a while. The only way to get a job on a ranch is to be around when the boss wants extra help. He won't send to another State for it, but will take on the first chap that comes along, even if he doesn't know much, as there is always some work on a ranch that even a green hand can do.

WILLOW BUNCH, SASK.

DEAR MR. NORTH: I am interested in the little town of Willow Bunch, Sask., and the adjacent country. Can you give me any data regarding this region? MIDDLE WEST.

Here is the best I can do. Perhaps some reader can supplement my information with some firsthand dope on the place. If so, I'll forward the letter to this correspondent. Willow Bunch is situated nine miles from Verwood, on the Canadian Pacific Railway, in a wheat and mixed farming district. Land values average eighteen dollars an acre raw, and from twenty-five to thirty dollars an acre improved. The population is about four hundred. I believe that the land department of the Hudson's Bay Company, at Winnipeg, Manitoba, and the Canadian Pacific Railway, at Calgary, Alberta, have a number of farms for sale in the adjacent territory. They would no doubt be glad to send you descriptions of these properties on application.

MISSING

This department is conducted in both WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE and DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

BASHRON, DAVE, is thought to have enlisted in the U. S. army about a year ago. He is five feet five inches tall, has blue eyes, brown hair, and weighed about one hundred and thirty pounds then. Joseph H. Sheldon, Attleboro, Mass., would like to hear from him.

JOHN P.—Write and let us know how you are. Wm. D. Struehko, 36 Richland St., Worcester, Mass.

MULLAVY, FRANK, was last heard of in January, 1923, when he was employed by a lumber company in Winton, Idaho. He is twenty-two years old, five feet ten inches tall, has blue eyes, blond hair, and fair complexion. His mother, Mrs. John Mullavy, 628 W. 83d St., Seattle, Wash., will be very grateful for any information pertaining to his present whereabouts.

RUNDGREN, JOHN, was working in the mines and smelters in Moffat, Colo., about fourteen years ago, but has not been heard of since. He is forty-two years old, has light hair, and blue eyes. Information as to his present whereabouts will be appreciated by Mrs. Wm. Nicholson, 803 E. Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

BASS, GILSON, age twenty-seven, was last heard of about three years ago, in Chicago, Ill., where he lived with his mother. J. C. Wiggin, Orange, Texas, will be glad to receive any news of him.

McCONN, WM., born in Springfield, Mass., forty-two years ago, is being sought, at this time, by his daughter G. S., care of this magazine.

BURGUS, IRENE, formerly of Herkimer, N. Y.—She is forty-one years old, small of stature and of dark complexion. Information regarding her or her family, will be appreciated by her daughter G. S., care of this magazine.

RHYAN.—In 1905 he was employed by a railroad company, and worked at the Old Forge, N. H., station. He is married and has an adopted daughter, who is the child of his wife's sister. Any news of this family will be appreciated by G. S., care of this magazine.

AIKEN, Mrs. and **Mr. ELLSWORTH C., Jr.**—Mrs. Aiken was formerly Miss Helen Landy. Mrs. Martin Landy, 142 Union Ave., Bridgeport, Conn., would like to hear from or about them.

ATTENTION.—Will any of the boys who were shipmates of "Curly" and "Dusty," on the "four stackers," a few years ago, please write to James R. "Curly" Washburn, Box 334, National Military Home of Indiana.

ZULKE, ROBERT, supposedly of Chicago, Ill., will learn news of interest by communicating with his nephew, Alfred Becker, 20 St. Marks Pl., New York City.

MATHEWS, JOHN, left Richmond, Va., en route to New York City, in January, this year, but was later heard of in Weldon, N. C. Queen Gardner, 302 E. Clay St., Richmond, Va., is anxious and will be glad to receive any information regarding him.

FRANCIS.—Letters addressed to you have all been returned. Please send your correct address. Pal.

NICHOLSON, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, has been missing since April 8, 1925. He served during the World War, and was later known to be in Washington and Idaho. Any one knowing his present whereabouts will confer a favor upon Kathleen G Nicholson, 16 Lambert St., Roxbury, Boston, Mass., by writing at once.

MICKEY.—Trusting and waiting. Mail sent to old address will be forwarded on to me. Mrs. B. M. C.

POWERS, VINCENT, was in Oran, Mo., when last heard from, and is thought at this time to be in Illinois. He is tall, slender, fifty-seven years old, of dark complexion, and by trade a carpenter. Any one knowing his present whereabouts please write to Mrs. A. J. Gay, Jr., Panama City, Fla.

WICKS, JAMES HUGH.—Please write to me care of this magazine, as I have important news for you. Frank.

TURNER, ALBERT C., has not been heard from since Feb. 2, 1925. He is five feet eleven inches tall, has black hair, blue eyes, tattooed mark on left arm, wore glasses, and weighed one hundred and sixty pounds when last seen. His mother, Mrs. Josie Turner, Cottage St., Huntsville, Ala., is worried about him.

JACK F.—Jack, Jr., is well. Please write to Mrs. D. M. Beck, University Lunch, corner Broad and Montgomery Ave., Philadelphia, Pa.

GARBER, JACK, of Pennsylvania, was employed for many years as engineer for the Great Western Railway, and about twenty years ago he was badly scalded in a wreck near Des Moines, Iowa. In 1907, when he was divorced from his wife, he was also separated from his daughter, Marguerite Ruth, who is now trying to find him. Will any one having any information as to his present whereabouts please write to Mrs. Ruth Barnacle, R. R. 1, White Bear Lake, Minn.?

WILLARD, STEWART J., was last heard of in Los Angeles, Calif. His sister, Mrs. J. L. Cooper, Claremore, Okla., would like to hear from him again.

WIMMER, FRANK, served in the 61st Inf., Camp Jackson, S. C., and two years ago, when he was discharged, left for Cincinnati, Ohio. He is twenty-six years old, has blue eyes and brown hair. His sister, Virginia Fisher, 5611 McVickers Ave. N., Chicago, Ill., will be grateful for any news of him.

SHERER, CLAYTON.—Am worried. Please write to mother.

BUTLER, KLON ALLEN.—Will any one knowing his peresent whereabouts please write to E. B. S., care of this magazine?

VIDITO, JAMES L., worked in Auburn, Me., in June, 1910, under the name of James L. Waters, but has not been heard from since that time. Any one knowing his present whereabouts please write to E., care of this magazine.

CAMPBELL, SAM, was last heard of in Ranger, Texas, in Oct., 1920. His son Elmer Campbell, Rt. 1, Box 141B, Ft. Smith, Ark., would be very grateful for any information.

BUSBY, LEONARD, lived in Columbus, Tenn., when a child, but has not been heard from since 1906. He is thirty-one years old, has dark hair and brown eyes. His sister, Dora Holderfield, R. F. D. No. 68, Tamms, Ill., would like to hear from or about him.

TOWNER, W. G., JIM and **CHARLIE.**—W. G. belongs to the Printers' Union and was last heard of in San Antonio, Texas. Their sister, Etta Irene Towner, 523 S. Colorado St., Kansas City, Mo., would like to get in touch with them.

WEST, CHARLES, musician, is being sought by his wife. He is thirty-three years old, of medium height, weighs one hundred and twenty-eight pounds, has brown hair, and blue eyes. About five months ago he was known to be in Easton, Pa. Any one knowing his present whereabouts please write to Marion, care of this magazine.

DAVIDSON, JOHN, who served in the 22d Div. or "The Lost Battalion," please write to your buddy, Luther Thompson, 2000 Warren Ave., Chicago, Ill.

MONTGOMERY, ANDREW E., was in Torrance, Calif., where he worked in the oil fields, when last heard from. He is twenty-seven years old, five feet two inches tall, has brown hair, and blue eyes. Mrs. E. C. Montgomery, Elmwood, Ill., would be very glad to receive any information about her son.

McLELLAN, JACK.—Please return my picture, as I have use for it elsewhere. Marie M.

PEARSON, HAROLD LEA, formerly a sailor on the U. S. S. "Hancock," has not been heard from since 1920. Alice Walker, 13 E. Adam St., Edinburgh, Scotland, would like to have his present address.

GRAHAM, ROY, was last heard of in Batesville, Ark., in 1914. Any information as to his present whereabouts will be appreciated by Marion Graham, 857 N. Clark St., Chicago, Ill.

WENK, WM., left Montague, Mich., thirty years ago, supposedly starting for the Klondike, during the gold rush. His niece, Emma Malloy, 308 E. 50th St., Seattle, Wash., will be grateful for information about him, whether he is dead or alive.

REX, GEORGE.—I know your past, but my feelings for you haven't changed. My folks don't know the truth, so please come back. E. S., on the Fraser.

CROKER, BILL, served in the A. E. F. during the World War for thirty-three months, later enlisted in the U. S. navy, and was last heard of in Richmond Va., in April, 1925. Information as to his present whereabouts will be appreciated by R. L. B., care of this magazine.

JOE.—Doctors say I can live only about six months. Please write or come to see me before it is too late. "Seven-Oh-Three." Write care of Mrs. L. M. Hamilton, 976 Harney St., Georgetown Sta., Seattle, Wash.

WEGEHAUPT, WALTER L., served in the U. S. marines between 1918 and 1920, and was stationed on the U. S. S. "Wyoming." He worked on a ranch at Lander, Wyo., and later on a farm in Minnesota. His friends and relatives are not aware of his present address, and any information will be appreciated by Leone Radante, 3329 North Ave., Milwaukee, Wis.

GEORGE, WALTER R.—Please write. Your actions are forgiven. Nettie.

EDGERTON, CHAS. H., has not been heard from since 1894, when he was living in Gloversville, N. Y. He is sixty-nine years old, and has dark hair, eyes, and complexion. His sister, Louisa Fardett, 48 Rowland St., Ballston Sta., N. Y., would like to hear from any one knowing him at this time.

BLOOMFIELD, ED., recently of Walla Walla, Wash., will learn some important news by communicating with B. M., care of this magazine.

STOHL, KARL FABIAN, was in Dallas, Ore., when last heard from. He is about fifty years old, has light hair, and blue eyes. No word has been received from him for thirteen years, and his sisters are very anxious to find him now. Please send any helpful news of him to Estelle Gustavson, R. F. D. 4, Box 868G, Tacoma, Wash.

BRAN, MILDRED "BUDDY," last heard of in Orlando, Fla. Any information as to her present whereabouts will be appreciated by F. S. F., care of this magazine.

MILLER, HARRY A., has not been seen by his father since he was six years old, which is twelve years ago. Any information as to his present whereabouts will be appreciated by Harry Taylor, R. R. 1, Monrovia, Calif.

TORREY, JOE, of Ottawa, Kan., and **PRUITT, A. G.,** of Cherryvale, Kan.—Please write to Moses Simmons, Woodynook Farm, Glenellyn, Ill.

KENDALL, DICK, or any member of his family.—His niece, Ruby Kendall Graham, 755 Calhun St., Tallahassee, Fla., is anxious to meet some of her father's relatives. Any one knowing the family please write.

COMBO, LEIGHTON.—Sure glad to hear from you. Remember old times, and write again. Horace Long, Morristown, Tenn.

DE ARMOND, R. A., left his home in Dallas, Tex., in 1909, and has not been heard from since. It is very important that his daughter, Mae De Armond, 2137 Wall St., Dallas, Tex., communicate with him during the near future, and she will be grateful for any assistance in finding him.

E. J. M.—We all love you, and want you to forgive us. Please write. B. M.

ROBERTS, BOB or **TEX,** recently of Central, Ore., where he was riding the range for stock men. He is an ex-service man, thirty-seven years old, six feet two inches tall, weighs about two hundred pounds, has black hair, brown eyes, and a ruddy complexion. Any one knowing his whereabouts at this time please communicate with Mrs. Bessie Cameron, care of this magazine, who has some good news for him.

BUDDY.—Don't you want to know about your baby, who grows more like you each day? Won't try to force you to return, if you'd rather remain away, but please write, anyway. Betty, Box 164, Billings, Mont.

BATES, Dr., was practicing medicine in Wapella, Ill., in 1895, but moved from town, without leaving any forwarding address. Vera Leana Baker, Wapella, Ill., would like to hear from him.

CARPENTER, RUSSELL, when last heard of was en route from Illinois to Missouri or Wyoming. He is five feet nine inches tall, seventeen years old, has brown hair and blue eyes. His mother is terribly worried and wants him to come home. Mrs. Julia Carpenter, R. R. 3, Box 43, Sciotoville, Ohio.

BEN.—Working for myself since April. Am anxious to hear from you. Write to me care of Gen. Del., Charleston, W. Va. Sister Bettie.

INGLES, or **INGELS, ROBERT E.,** was in Kansas City, Mo., in April this year. He is thirty-nine years old, five feet ten inches tall, weighs about one hundred and seventy-five pounds, has blue eyes and gray hair. He is a carpenter by trade. Information as to his present whereabouts will be appreciated by Goldie, care of this magazine.

GEORGE G., recently of Salt Creek, Wyo.—Please write to your brother, Walter, care of this magazine.

LUBER, ANDY, is sole heir to his father's estate. Any one knowing where he is at this time please communicate with E. R., 1412 White Rock Ave., Waukesha, Wis.

PZYBYLSKI or **LEWIS, ANDY,** was detailed on the U. S. S. "California" in 1922, but has not been heard from since that time. Please write to R., care of this magazine.

LUCAS, ARTHUR, has not been heard from since 1917, when he was employed on a Great Lakes steamer between Sault Ste. Marie and Ashtabula, Ohio. He is fifty years old, and has blue eyes and dark hair. His sister, Mrs. M. A. Jones, Box 165, Benjamin, Tex., will be very grateful for any news of him.

HAMILTON, STEWART, was last heard of in Eldorado Springs, Mo., in July, 1923, but is thought at this time to be living in Kansas. He is five feet nine inches tall, dark, and an ex-service man. Please send information about him to T., care of this magazine.

CALLEY.—You had left Lawndale, Calif., when I arrived there. Why didn't you leave a forwarding address? Please write to Churchie, care of this magazine.

BAXTER, Mrs., is being sought by her daughter, who was left at an orphanage in St. Louis, Mo., almost twenty years ago, when an infant. She was adopted by a family named Gilmore, of Bluefield, W. Va., and is now Mrs. Marie Beougher, 1940 Linden Ave., Knoxville, Tenn.

SPRING, Mrs. JOHN, nee Caroline Newton, when last heard from, thirteen years ago, was living near Beach, N. D. At that time she had a family of four children, and they all worked on a range. Her mother, Mrs. Joe Allen, 1818 E. Lake St., Minneapolis, Minn., will be very thankful for any news of her.

J. L. B.—Mother and daddy are growing old and gray, and long to see or hear from you. Please write to Mommy, care of this magazine.

WOODRUFF, GEORGE, army cook, was stationed in a camp near Niagara Falls, N. Y., in 1917, but has not been heard of since that time. His nephew is trying to find him, and will be very glad to receive any information sent to L. G. H., care of this magazine.

BLACK, Dr. JACOB J., deceased.—His address, prior to his death, is wanted, for business reasons, by F. L. Biggs, 120 W. Pleasant St., Mt. Vernon, Ohio.

ATTENTION.—Will any of the boys who served with Field Hospital No. 17, A. E. F., during the World War, please write to Wm. Graddy, 1111 Virginia Ave., Fairmont, W. Va.

HOBBS, BESSIE and **VIRGINIA,** left Santa Barbara, Calif., with their father and stepmother, who had been a Mrs. Brown, of San Luis, Calif. It has been rumored their father is dead, and their stepmother is known to be unfit to care for them properly. Will any one knowing where they are at this time please communicate with their grandmother, Mrs. C. E. Hobbs, Rt. B, Box 239, Bakersfield, Calif., who is able and willing to properly care for these children?

MAGUIRE, JOHN, has been gone from his home in Wheeling, W. Va., since June 2, 1925. His wife is very anxious to hear from him, and promises, if he will return, conditions will be very different. N. M.

B. B.—We are all well. Baby is with us. Please write. R. B.

RHUMER, FOREST, DAVID, and **WILLIAM,** were last heard of in Indianapolis, Ind. David joined the U. S. navy in Alabama in 1920. Their aunt, Grace, would like to hear from or about them, care of this magazine.

ALTON, EDWIN SAMUEL, is a graduate of the University of Maine, and worked for the General Electric Company in Ohio in 1921. He is six feet tall, has blue eyes and light hair. He will receive information to his own advantage by writing to P. O. M., care of this magazine.

McDOWELL or **McDONALD, THOMAS FRANCIS,** was last heard of in Milwaukee, Wis. His sister, Mrs. L. P. F., 5173 Lawndale Ave., Detroit, Mich., will appreciate any news of him.

HENDRICKS, alias **SMIDTH** or **SMITH, JOHN,** enlisted in the 95th Infantry of the U. S. army during the Civil War. Any information regarding him, dead or alive, or his descendants, will be appreciated by a relative, Chas. B. Hendricks, 711 W. 13th St., Kansas City, Mo.

BLOOM or **BREWSTER, FRED,** was born in New Orleans, La.—When last heard of he was living with his folks in Brooklyn, N. Y., and working for the Westinghouse Electric Company. He is tall, slim, and dark. If he will communicate with M. W., care of this magazine, he will receive a full explanation of the misunderstanding between them.

POWELL, Mrs. CARRIE, lived in Richmond, Va., in 1918, later moving to Portsmouth, Va. Information as to her present whereabouts will be gratefully received by J. Mathison, Box 487, Lynchburg, Va.

BERRY, DONALD.—Please write to Lute and Rich, Box 185, Clear Lake, Idaho.

ARMSTRONG, BEN.—Everything is O. K. No matter where you may be please write to your pal, Carl S., 110 S. 21st St., Philadelphia, Pa.

HALL, RUBY L., left his home in March this year, and has not been heard from since. He is twenty years old, weighs one hundred and forty-five pounds, has brown hair and brown eyes. His wife is very much worried about him, and will be thankful for any information sent to M. L. H., care of this magazine.

EDDIE.—All is forgiven. We want you home. Write me care of Mrs. Killian. M. L. S.

WELLINGTON, BUCK.—Have a dandy scheme. Will get you a new pilot's license, if needed. Write at once to Frank E.

DAVIS, CLAUD.—My love is still true. Please write. Marie.

POWELL, JAMES, has not been heard from since he left San Diego, Calif. James Gannon, 48 Richards Terrace, Roath, Cardiff, South Wales, Eng., is anxious to find him and will appreciate any information.

WARFIELD, JOHN, moved from the Middle West to California in the spring of 1925. He is tall, thin, has black hair and black eyes. Ivelyn Williams, 315 Langdon St., Toledo, Ohio, is very anxious to hear from him.

DADDY, DEAR.—Please write to mother and me or come home. There is no danger, and we still love you. Ada.

BOLSTER, HARRY OLEN, was in Red Creek, N. Y., in 1913, and has not been heard from since. He is thirty-one years old, has brown eyes, dark hair, and fair complexion. His sister, Mrs. Tom Pillsbury, Jonesville, Mich., will be grateful for any news of him.

BOLSTER, Mrs. ANNA, was living in Hamlin, N. Y., in 1914, but has since moved, leaving no forwarding address. Will any one knowing her present address please write to Mrs. Tom Pillsbury, Jonesville, Mich.?

MEROW, MYRTLE.—She has brown hair and blue eyes. Her friend and pal, Ivelyn Williams, 315 Langdon St., Toledo, Ohio., will be very glad to receive any information as to her present whereabouts.

SIDNAM, MILO.—Please write to your sister Bessie, as she is particularly anxious to hear from you at this time.

GRAY, JAMES M., was stationed in the U. S. army at Manila, P. I., about four years ago, and has not been heard from since. News of him will be appreciated by Mabel Hughes, care of this magazine.

GORDON, J. O. or ODIE, was last heard from at Maysville, Okla., in June, 1925. His brother is anxious for some word from or about him. Joe Gordon, Artesia, N. M.

WOULFRY, J. M.—Was glad to get your letter. You are more than welcome at home. G. J. F.

STICE, LAURA, was living in Mexia, Tex., in March of this year. Any one knowing her present address please write to Joe Gordon, Artesia, N. M.

TEAL, JOHN CALVIN, sometimes called Jack.—He is of medium build and light complexion. It is very important that his brother, Charles Teal, 520 Cass St., Monroe, Mich., hear from him as soon as possible, as their father's estate remains unsettled pending the return of John.

TOTMAN, CLAYTON.—He is known to have been in Corsicana, Tex., in April, 1925. Joe Gordon, Artesia, N. M., would like to hear from him.

BRENNEN, JACK, and his pal "Yankee," were last seen in Buffalo, N. Y., where they worked as bellhops at the Cheltenham Hotel, in 1923, and it is thought they are now in New York or Atlantic City. Any one knowing the present whereabouts of either please write to Miss M. C. of Buffalo, care of this magazine.

ROHROCK, RUTH, was last heard of in Dallas, Tex. She is asked to write to her sister, Mildred, care of this magazine.

SMITH, SARAH LOUISE, was born in Boston, Mass., forty-one years ago. She has black hair and a dark complexion. She was taken from the Marcella St. Home in Roxbury, Mass., and was last heard of in a New York home. Her mother, Mrs. Ellen Arnold, 298 Essex Ave., W. Gloucester, Mass., is trying to find her and will be very thankful for any helpful information.

SPRUNK, WM.—Can join you now. Please write to Willie Morgan, Box 448, Big Spring, Tex.

LEWIS, WM. H., unexpectedly took leave of his home in Pasadena, Calif., on Dec. 16, 1924. His home life was unusually happy, and his devoted wife is very anxious for some trace of him, dead or alive. Any one having information regarding him will confer a favor upon Dr. Myrtabel Lewis, 355 N. Raymond Ave., Pasadena, Calif., by communicating with her at once.

G. H. and J. R.—Joe's mother is worried, and she can return if she wants to. Have news for you. Write to W. C.

VEINER, HENRY, who formerly traveled with the Barnum-Bailey Circus.—His friend, Pvt. Lester Connor, Ward 16D, Ancon Hospital, Panama, wants to hear from him.

MURRAY, JOHN McARTHUR, was born in Scotland, later moving with his people to Toronto, Can. He left his home there five years ago, and his mother has tried since to find him. He is eighteen years old, over five feet tall, has brown hair and gray eyes. He is thought to be in the United States at this time. Any information concerning him will be gladly received by Mrs. Margaret Murray, 14 Blevius Pl., Toronto, Ont., Can.

LAIRD, CARL E., was stationed in 1918 at Fort Sill, Okla. He is thirty years old, has light hair, blue eyes, and fair complexion. His home, originally, was in Colorado, but his family has since moved to Iowa. Any one who can offer information regarding his present whereabouts please write to Mrs. A. S., care of this magazine.

D. D. S. B.—We all feel badly about your absence from home. Please come back, or write to your sister, V. L. D. B., care of this magazine.

VOSS, RICHARD L.—Your best friend has been taken to the State Hospital over worry about you. Try to see her there before it is too late. Geo. Cochrane, Rt. 19, Lendenaw N., New Brunswick, N. J.

TALBERT, BERT J.—Care enough for you to forgive what has happened. We can start over again. Will come to you if you want me. G. B. T.

MAYLEE, EUGENE, left Everson, W. Va., about eight years ago, deserting his wife and four children. He is colored, five feet ten inches tall, about forty years old, and weighed one hundred and fifty pounds. Any information as to his present whereabouts will prove helpful to E. C. Sloan, Brownsville, Pa.

ALBERT.—The children and I want you to come home. Please do. May.

TUCKER, JOHN HARRISON, died in 1885, and his relatives are being sought at this time. His father's people came from Scotland. It is thought he was born and reared in Tuckerton, N. J. He was survived by a wife and eight children. Any helpful information will be appreciated by M. T., care of this magazine.

O'NEIL, MICHAEL, formerly of the 27th Inf., Schofield Barracks, Honolulu.—Allen Atkinson San Joaquin P. & L. Co., Black Rock Camp, Fresno, Calif., would like to hear from him.

BUCK, LEONARD, wrestler and football player, was a member of the Field Artillery Battery, stationed at Schofield Barracks, Honolulu. Any one knowing his present address please write to Allen Atkinson, San Joaquin P. & L. Co., Black Rock Camp, Fresno, Calif.

MORGAN, WAYNE, was last heard of at McNeil Island Wash., where he was stationed in the U. S. army. Will any one knowing where he is located at this time please write to Allen Atkinson, San Joaquin P. & L. Co., Black Rock Camp, Fresno, Calif.

YOLER, E. R., of Big Lake, Texas.—Please write to M. Morgan, Hotel Lark, 447 Eddy St., San Francisco, Calif.

LYNCH, EDWARD, emigrated from Belfast, Ireland, in 1901, and settled in Burke, Idaho, later moving to Cheyenne, Wyo. He was a carpenter, of medium height, has blue eyes and brown hair. His sister, Mrs. Convery, Box 87, S. San Francisco, Calif., is very anxious for some word from or about him.

PAT.—We all love you and believe in you. Please write to me care of this magazine. Teddy.

LAW, Mrs. LEE, nee **EVE WRINGHER**, was last heard from when she lived near Clayton, N. M. A chum will be glad to receive any information addressed to Box 733, Slaton, Tex.

CURRAN, ALBERT, MARTIN, HANNAH, HATTIE, and **SARAH**, of Toronto, Can., or their descendants, are being sought by a brother who is old and sick, and needs them. Write to Mrs. L. J. care of this magazine.

LARSON, REUBEN C., was last seen at Salt Lake City, Utah, in May, this year. He is twenty years old, has light hair, and ruddy complexion. His mother, Mrs. Amelia Larson, care of Polson R. R. Camp, Hoquiam, Wash., will be very thankful for any news of him.

BURKS, GILBERT M.—He has blue eyes and light hair. It is thought he is living in North Dakota at this time. Will any one knowing his present address please write to Box 114, Chaonia, Mo.?

PAUL.—Have changed my mind! Please come, at once, to Marie.

SCARBOURGH, GEORGE, was last heard from in 1916 when he was working for Horace Byrd, at Surrency, Ga. Any one knowing his present address please notify Jesse Dixon, care of A. C. L., R. R. Shops, Lakeland, Fla.

"BILLY PEANUTS."—You will learn some news of importance by writing at once to Dee, care of this magazine.